

PART ONE

(Under fire.)

CHARLEY: They're not exactly what you'd call grateful, are they. They should thank us. All we've done is start a bit of a revolution, unshackled the underdogs, stirred them up a bit, haven't we? Doctor?

DOCTOR: Hmm?

CHARLEY: I was saying, Doctor, we've tried to help them and now they're shooting at us!

DOCTOR: That's often the way.

CHARLEY: Are you all right?

DOCTOR: I was just thinking. How about a trip to Venice, Charley?

CHARLEY: What? Look, we're in imminent danger of being shot to smithereens and

DOCTOR: I just fancy it. It popped into my head.

CHARLEY: Run, Doctor!

DOCTOR: They're not exactly grateful for my help, are they?

CHARLEY: I just said. Oh, why do I bother? Are people ever?

DOCTOR: Yes, sometimes.

CHARLEY: Oh, good for you. Now how about getting us away from here before they tell us outright how pleased they were for freeing all their slaves and closing down their weaponry installations.

DOCTOR: That's what I'm trying to do, Charley. I'm attempting to save our necks, find the Tardis and plan our next trip all at the same time. I may have overextended myself.

(Running boots.)

CHARLEY: I rather think you have.

DOCTOR: This way.

(Explosion.)

DOCTOR: There she is. There she is, Bright, bold, beautiful and bright blue, waiting for us. Now, where's the key?

CHARLEY: Will you hurry up?

DOCTOR: It's in my shoe, of course.

MAN [OC]: Turn around and drop your weapons!

DOCTOR: Charley, quickly, inside. And as for you lot. I don't carry weapons. I don't need them. And I must say, I think you treat your visitors here in a very shabby manner indeed. In fact

CHARLEY: Oh Doctor, get in!

(Door shuts in a hail of bullets.)

(Footsteps.)

DOCTOR: What a terrible lot. Just because I put an end to their reign of terror. Didn't they know that's what I do? There's nothing I like more than putting the kibosh on a really good vile regime.

CHARLEY: And what do you do in your spare time, Doctor?

DOCTOR: Have a nice cup of tea.

(The Tardis dematerialises.)

DOCTOR: And dematerialise for a while. I'll put the kettle on, and you put your feet up, or whatever it is you do.

CHARLEY: Well, I'm going to check on poor Ramsey. He'll be worried about us.

DOCTOR: He's a Vortisaur, Charley. He can't get worried. We really ought to take him home. He's looking much better these days.

CHARLEY: Oh, must we?

DOCTOR: Well, I think

CHARLEY: Were you serious?

DOCTOR: What about?

CHARLEY: Our going to Venice.

DOCTOR: I don't see why not. We can go absolutely anywhere we want. Do you want?

CHARLEY: Don't see why not. Frankly, somewhere peaceful without being threatened with death every five minutes would be rather nice.

(Church bells ringing.)

ORSINO: (sighs) What would it take to bring her back, Churchwell?

CHURCHWELL: I really don't know, Your Grace. I'm not sure she'd be keen.

ORSINO: Isn't that what we all want? Wouldn't that make everything worth it?

CHURCHWELL: Perhaps.

ORSINO: You think not? Could it be you're less devoted to my Estella than the rest of my people? You don't think that she could save us?

CHURCHWELL: I do not think anything could save us, Your Grace.

ORSINO: Just as well. Salvation is, I think, such a dull and worthy concept. But to see her again. Oh, when I think of when we first came to this city, they made her such sumptuous gifts. I knew they had all fallen in love with her. We alighted at Rialto, and proceeded to San Marco, and they lined the walkways and canals to see her pass, just to see what she was wearing.

CHURCHWELL: It is true the people of Venice adored Estella. But even if she returned tonight, she still couldn't save us.

ORSINO: They gave her the book she coveted. Volumes printed letter by letter onto the finest vellum, covered with the richest shot silk. She returned laughing one day, and our servants were carrying her spoils. Twenty four crates of fish and fruit and wine, and a hundredweight of church candles.

CHURCHWELL: Sir, this dwelling on the past, it isn't good. This was over a hundred years ago.

ORSINO: Soon there'll be nothing left but the past, Churchwell. Tell me she'll be back before the end. Tell me she'll be here.

CHARLEY: I'm not so sure I'm keen, actually.

DOCTOR: Of course you are.

CHARLEY: You said that we could go anywhere. Venice always sounds something of a gloomy place.

DOCTOR: Didn't you go there on any of your travels?

CHARLEY: They weren't really travels.

DOCTOR: You said you were a traveller.

CHARLEY: Well, it's certainly what I'd like to be. Father wasn't keen on my striking out by myself.

DOCTOR: Well, you can see the world now, anyway.

CHARLEY: With you to protect me? I'm sure my family would be suitably mollified.

DOCTOR: I'm sure they would.

CHARLEY: They'll be shocked, I'm sure, when you eventually take me back.

DOCTOR: Yes, they will. When we go back.

CHARLEY: What's so special about Venice anyway?

DOCTOR: It's magnificent, and charming, and often quite silent and sinister. Last time I watched the lights spilling from Palace windows onto the Grand Canal, and all the stars looked like they were trapped underwater, bursting to get out.

CHARLEY: This place is gloomy enough.

DOCTOR: And you get all these people swishing past in their gondolas, gorging themselves on fruit and cakes. The whole place lights up wonderfully at night and looks new. In the morning it's all desolate and ruined.

CHARLEY: Couldn't you do something about tidying this place up?

DOCTOR: The Tardis? What's wrong with it?

CHARLEY: For a really futuristic ship, what you ought to have is gleaming white surfaces and bright flashing controls, and, I mean, it's the 1930s now, Doctor. This place is like something out of Jules Verne.

DOCTOR: It might be the 1930s to you, Charley. For me it's nothing of the kind.

CHARLEY: And which decade is it for you? You've been a little evasive about that. You can't shock me, you know. I've heard enough outrageous things by now.

DOCTOR: Which decade? All of them. None of them. I don't really know any more. Ah, we're about to arrive.

CHARLEY: When? You were talking about the early Venetian Renaissance before, when you were muttering and fiddling with your coordinates. You made the sixteenth century sound entertaining. Have you managed to find it?

DOCTOR: Er, no, it's the twenty third century.

CHARLEY: So it isn't the Venetian Renaissance, then?

DOCTOR: Not really, no.

CHARLEY: Good.

DOCTOR: That's not so good. It isn't what you'd call the best time to drop in on Venice.
(The Tardis materialises.)

CHARLEY: Why, what's wrong with it?

DOCTOR: There's not a great deal of it left.

(Clock ticking in the background. Church bells still ringing.)

ORSINO: Tomorrow morning, I can't stop myself from hoping that tomorrow morning, I'll see her again. That she'll come walking back into the Palace. Is it too late to say I know what a fool I was?

CHURCHWELL: It is really, sir.

ORSINO: I gambled on the one thing I had no right to. I can still see the look in her eyes. At the second I made my stake, neither she nor I could believe I'd bargained on the only thing I could never replace. She looked so hurt, and then, that look hardened. I had betrayed her in the only way she could never forgive. Of course she had to curse me. Of course she had to curse this whole city.

CHURCHWELL: It isn't her curse. This place would die even without Estella's intervention.

ORSINO: Oh! See, my dear, how corrupt we are, when even my servants contradict me?

Contradict me again, Churchwell, and I will have you skewered.

CHURCHWELL: Oh, I'm sorry, Your Grace.

ORSINO: Estella, my people are waiting for me. They need their Count to watch over the last of their revels. They are expecting me, I think, to deliver them from your evil.

(Door closes, walking on stone streets.)

DOCTOR: I've never been here at this time before.

CHARLEY: Is it dangerous? I mean, obviously what I really want is for you to put me in the midst of a really life-threatening situation. I'd really like that. Oh, you'd notice that, of course.

DOCTOR: It all depends how long there is before the whole place goes tumbling and crumbling into the warm Adriatic. But by the looks of it we're safe enough on an upper storey. It looks to me as if the lower storeys of some of those palaces out there have vanished completely.

CHARLEY: Look at the state of this place. It's all seen better days. I'd be ashamed to have carpets like this. No wonder it's deserted.

DOCTOR: If I remember rightly most people cleared out at the last minute, right before the great crash. It'll be something to see, Charley. Venice is one of the great old cities of Earth. Imagine seeing it sink, watching the marble facades cracking and dropping.

CHARLEY: I'm not sure I want to be around, really.

DOCTOR: Oh, I would. There might only be days left. Or hours or minutes.

CHARLEY: You're trying to unsettle me.

DOCTOR: Am I?

CHARLEY: You know you are.

DOCTOR: Look, here's someone. Maybe they haven't evacuated completely. Madam, good morning.

LAVISH: It's six in the evening, young man. Are you drunk?

DOCTOR: Certainly not.

LAVISH: They're mostly drunk. They seem to think it's the thing to do.

DOCTOR: Fatalism.

CHARLEY: Seems like a fair enough response to me.

LAVISH: They're all here for the party. That's what they think it is.

DOCTOR: And it isn't?

LAVISH: Crazy aristocrats, madmen, inveterate revellers, all of them here for the final carnival of all. I don't know what they're expecting, besides a great deal of destruction. They'll all die, of course.

DOCTOR: And you? Why are you here?

LAVISH: Is he always this impertinent?

DOCTOR: Me?

CHARLEY: Sometimes he's downright rude. He forgets about things like good manners and introductions. I'm Charley Pollard, and he's the Doctor.

LAVISH: Eleanor Lavish. I can't say he's any worse than some of them that have made it here recently. At least he's made an effort to dress up in a dignified fashion. Most of them wear their carnival costumes all day and night, and lie about in drunken stupors.

DOCTOR: We aren't revellers. Well, not usually.

LAVISH: No?

CHARLEY: The Doctor has got this scientific curiosity.

DOCTOR: I'm curious about all sorts of things. I'm interested in why people would flock to a

place that is about to be destroyed. I mean, what must be going through their minds? They must have a very good reason.

LAVISH: A last look at the frescos? Perhaps they want to loot the Treasuries that are already slipping beneath the waves. Maybe they all have a death wish, and want to enact it in the most glamorous place they can conceive of. I think that all of the above are true.

CHARLEY: Why are you here?

LAVISH: I am too old to go gallivanting off. This is where I belong.

DOCTOR: There'll be nothing here soon. It'll turn back into the lagoon it once was.

LAVISH: I can hardly wait. I'll get some peace. I'll find myself some opulent ballroom, and watch the chandeliers grow extravagant beards of lichen and weed, and the monstrous fish take up residence in the sepulchral boudoirs of ancient princesses.

DOCTOR: Put that way, it sounds rather nice.

CHARLEY: But you'll be dead! You'll drown!

LAVISH: Everything I have is here. I don't have the time to start up elsewhere. No, far better that I slip quietly below the surface with the rest of my life.

CHARLEY: Thanks, Doctor.

DOCTOR: What have I done?

CHARLEY: You were supposed to bring me somewhere gorgeous on holiday. We were supposed to get out of that Gothic nightmare of a ship of yours to somewhere lovely. This is worse than ever. You've brought me somewhere horrible where everyone wants to die.

LAVISH: I was only telling you what you wanted to know. If you want cheering up, talk to some of the revellers. They seem to be having a nice enough time. If that's the kind of shallow person you are. I did think you seemed a rather more sensible young lady.

CHARLEY: I am. All I meant was, I didn't expect to be here in the middle of some ghastly natural disaster, that's all.

LAVISH: There isn't anything natural about it, my dear.

DOCTOR: Venice has been sinking for years. It was always on the cards.

LAVISH: On the cards. Oh, that's rich. That's very good. No. That gradual process of the water's crepitation, and the very natural decay of a metropolis built on the murky waters of a lagoon, that isn't what we're talking about. Venice will die because of the curse.

DOCTOR: Ah yes. Now we're getting to it. Okay, Charley, do you want to ask her or shall I?

CHARLEY: Oh, you do it, Doctor. You know you love it.

DOCTOR: Right. So tell me, Ms Lavish. What curse?

LAVISH: Hah! That's as much as you'll get, my dears. I've said, as usual, far too much. But perhaps you will hear from me again. Yes, I'm sure that we will bump into each other again as the situation, the cataclysm we might say, worsens. But I have told you quite enough for now.

(Footsteps.)

DOCTOR: Wait. Where are you going?

LAVISH: We have to keep on the move, we last few denizens. We haven't the time to stand around moping. You will learn this. There will be time enough afterwards to loll about, when we're all with the fishes. For now, there are things to be looking at, a whole city to comb through, each nook and cranny, for the very last time. I suggest the two of you get moving.

(Footsteps and her voice fades.)

CHARLEY: She's crazy. Completely out of her tree.

DOCTOR: Riddled, and mildewed as the stone and wood and everything else around us. All

of it rotten and senseless.

CHARLEY: Thank you, Doctor.

DOCTOR: Oh, come on. Let's get out of here, You heard what she said. There's a party going on out there. A last desperate carnival, one really fantastic apocalyptic knees-up. Would you consider missing that for all the world?

CHARLEY: No, I don't suppose I would.

DOCTOR: Let's go then, Charley. I want to have a good old poke around. Now, what we need is transport.

(Walking off.)

ORSINO: I haven't the time to argue with you, Churchwell.

(Church bells ringing and the faint sound of a crowd.)

ORSINO: Look out there. They're swarming in the streets. They're massing in the hundreds, in their gaudy finery, all for the final night of the carnival.

CHURCHWELL: I know, Your Grace. But we have a responsibility, do we not, to those who come after us? To rescue the treasures Your Grace has accrued over the years. We ought to make sure they survive our

ORSINO: Our what, Churchwell? Our deaths? You're right, of course you are. All of that lot out there, everyone downstairs in the State Room and the ballroom, all will perish within the next twenty four hours. None of us will stand the slightest chance. It seems rather academic, may I say, to agitate and fulminate over the fate of a few objects and paintings.

CHURCHWELL: A few paintings? Your Grace, you entrusted me with the care of your collection, and that is simply what I am attempting, to the best of my meagre abilities, to do. We have to ship your delectable heirlooms out of the city before it is too late. We have to do it for the sake of future generations. This is art we're talking about.

ORSINO: I never had any stomach for art.

CHURCHWELL: But your forebears did. Your Estella did. That is why your collection is so important.

ORSINO: Anyhow, the last boats have gone. You know that. This late in the game, anything that was going to be salvaged has already been taken. Everything left, including each and every one of ourselves, is doomed. Leave me, dear Churchwell. It's ever so sweet to see you worked up like this, but to be honest, you're boring me now.

CHURCHWELL: You cannot bring Estella back, Your Grace. No matter how much you hope, it will not happen tonight.

ORSINO: Don't tell me what can and cannot happen, Churchwell! You are my curator. You are not the arbiter of possibility. Leave me. Return to your gallery. Or better, descend with me to the State Room, and attend the celebrations.

CHURCHWELL: I may, Your Grace. But I want to see the collection again before I do.

ORSINO: (sigh) Go, then.

(Water lapping.)

CHARLEY: Doctor, I think I've changed my mind.

DOCTOR: You have?

CHARLEY: I've decided to enjoy myself. All right, so you've brought me somewhere that's on the brink of calamity, as usual, and we'll be lucky to get out by the skin of our teeth, but it's still beautiful. It's still

DOCTOR: It's still Venice. It's somewhere fantastic, dreamlike, but it's doomed apotheosis.

CHARLEY: Mmm, something like that.

DOCTOR: See, I knew you'd cheer up once we were out on the canals.

CHARLEY: Oh, it's quite amazing. Our gondolier has even got webbed fingers and toes.

DOCTOR: I wondered if you'd noticed that.

CHARLEY: And he's got a remarkable physique.

DOCTOR: I'll snooze, I think, while you chat him up.

CHARLEY: Only you could snooze on the Day of Judgement.

DOCTOR: Mmm. Actually, I'm lying back here in the depths of melancholic thought. I think just as you cheered up, I caught a chill of gloom.

CHARLEY: Oh, wonderful.

PIETRO: (laugh) You two aren't like the others.

CHARLEY: Oh. You were listening.

(Revellers noises in the background.)

PIETRO: I am Pietro.

CHARLEY: Charley. And he's the Doctor, asleep over there.

DOCTOR: Not asleep, thinking. Having profound thoughts.

CHARLEY: Of course, Doctor. Tell me, how are we different, Pietro?

PIETRO: Not drunk. Not laughing. You're both respectful. You do know what's happening?

CHARLEY: We've been told.

PIETRO: Mmm, everyone knows what's happening to our city. That's why they come here, the revellers. They take the city from us. They don't respect us. I like you, Charley, for that fact alone. The city belongs to us, and you share our mourning. And your friend, he seems very moved.

CHARLEY: He is.

DOCTOR: I was here when it was still being built, when it still smelled like a swamp. Smell now. It smells of damp wool. There's still a trace of the primordial world beneath. A foretaste. Yes, I've been here again and again, Pietro. I'm here to pay my respects.

PIETRO: Good.

CHARLEY: What will you do, Pietro? Will you get away?

PIETRO: I'll be here. All the canal people will still be here. The city will be ours again when it returns to the water. We're waiting for it to happen.

DOCTOR: Yes, of course. I can see how you might be. Oh, we're here. Pietro, could you?

DOCTOR: This museum, a fine collection, as I remember.

CHARLEY: Art?

DOCTOR: Yes, Charley, art.

CHARLEY: I thought we were looking for a party. I'm not sure I want to look at some old pictures.

DOCTOR: Surrealist paintings, actually, in one of my favourite spots. There's a fantastic trattoria nearby, run by a bunch of the most amiable ex-actresses

PIETRO: Ah. They've fled.

DOCTOR: Oh. Never mind. Come along, Charley. If I remember rightly, they've got all sorts of things by René Magritte, Max Ernst, people from your era.

LAVISH: Rabble and scum. That's all we'll see until the end. Those two weren't any different.

Not really. They're probably here to join the cult. They probably are a cult all by themselves. Expecting the place to rise to its former glories, all of its own accord, magically. There isn't any such thing as magic, Doctor, Charley. Nothing is going to happen here. The pattern is set, more's the pity.

CHURCHWELL: It's most irregular, you know. It's most irregular indeed.

DOCTOR: I'm an irregular kind of guy.

CHURCHWELL: We don't open for private showings. This is the Duke's private collection.

DOCTOR: He won't mind. We're old friends.

CHURCHWELL: Really?

DOCTOR: No. Do you know, I used to be terribly good at name-dropping and bluffing my way into places, and these days I can't do it for toffee. Oh, go on, Mister Churchwell. Let me see the Maxstein's pictures. Just me.

CHURCHWELL: How do you know my name?

DOCTOR: It's on your badge. But your mother, it was she who fostered your love of painting, wasn't it? Who didn't laugh like your father did when they found you had no talent of your own? Who encouraged you to study and get your PhD, hmm?

CHURCHWELL: How could you possibly know about me?

DOCTOR: I know about all sorts of things, Francis Churchwell. More than you could imagine. Now, let the dog see the rabbit.

CHURCHWELL: I should be pleased, really. No one else will ever see these things again. The Duke himself has no interest. Soon they'll all be rotting under the sea.

DOCTOR: But that's terrible. What can he be thinking of? He's very lucky to have a good man like you as his curator. A man of integrity and vision, whose love of art above all else makes him stay here in this city, on the brink of collapse.

CHURCHWELL: Hmm. I'll give you my special deluxe guided tour. You're a man of intellect and discrimination, obviously. Do walk this way.

(Walking.)

CHARLEY: Pietro.

PIETRO: Ah. You've left your Doctor friend. Looking at his paintings, is he?

CHARLEY: I wanted to talk to you more. I want to know more.

PIETRO: You're curious, Charley, but we gondoliers aren't really meant to speak with revellers. It's always been like that.

CHARLEY: I don't care. I'm no snob. Where can we go to talk?

PIETRO: It's too open here. There is a place, nearby, where my people rest. Quickly, come with me.

CHARLEY: What's the hurry?

PIETRO: Look. Them.

CHARLEY: Who are they?

PIETRO: You don't want to get caught up with them, Charley. Best keep away from that set. They're the Cult of Estella. Grave robbers and fanatics. Him at the head, in the black head dress, the one looking so superior, he's their High Priest Vincenzo. A nasty piece of work.

VINCENZO: Search everywhere, you fools. It must be here on the left bank. We have only hours remaining. It is the last thing we need. And then, then we shall see. Then we can show them all.

CHARLEY: Thanks, Pietro. Are they dangerous? They look horrible.

PIETRO: You don't want to cross them. Let them go by. Then we'll meet with the others.

VINCENZO: Search everywhere. Keep searching. Until I give the order otherwise, search, search!

CHARLEY: They've gone.

PIETRO: I don't know what they're doing here. People say the cult has its base here on the left bank, but no-one knows where. It isn't often they're seen in daylight, parading in their robes.

CHARLEY: Mmm, they're certainly up to something.

PIETRO: Mmm.

CHURCHWELL: The Duke Orsino's much-prized reserved collection of unattributed paintings. I had them hung so we could take one last look.

DOCTOR: They're marvellous. Unattributed, you say? I like this one with all the volcanoes and the foxes running around in their smart little outfits. And this one of the lady in the great big glass jar.

CHURCHWELL: Mmm. That is from the Duke's grandfather's collection.

DOCTOR: It's criminal, the idea that all of these things will be destroyed.

CHURCHWELL: I have given up hope now. When the time comes, I will seal myself in the vault with the reserved reserved collection of erotic etchings.

DOCTOR: It can't be as bad as all that, surely?

CHURCHWELL: Oh, it is good to meet a true lover of art before the end.

DOCTOR: Why has the Duke lost interest?

CHURCHWELL: Oh All he can be bothered about is the loss of his great love Estella.

DOCTOR: Walked out on him, did she?

CHURCHWELL: One hundred years ago precisely.

DOCTOR: I see. She must have been, what do you call it? Very beautiful.

CHURCHWELL: Mmm, she was famed and lauded. Venice's last true Queen. She left him and cursed this whole city.

DOCTOR: I'm afraid I don't believe in curses.

CHURCHWELL: A rationalist?

DOCTOR: Not exactly. I just look for the best in people. Why would anyone curse a city where they were loved?

CHURCHWELL: If one is betrayed, one is apt to do all sorts of things.

DOCTOR: Is there a portrait of the famed Estella? I'd like to see her.

CHURCHWELL: No portrait exists.

DOCTOR: I can't believe that. The artists of this country have always loved producing portraits of their famous ladies. I remember Isabella d'Este when she was nineteen, demanding that Titian do her one. And Leonardo knock out a quick sketch. And then she had Agostino Barbarigo work for years on her likeness. Surely someone painted Estella?

CHURCHWELL: Never. She wouldn't have it. Her beauty was ineffable. You sound almost like the cultists, Doctor. They have besieged me for years. As this hundredth anniversary of her leaving has approached, they are convinced we hoard Estella's likeness somewhere here, Because they worship her in their infernal ceremonies, they believe they have a claim on such an object.

DOCTOR: Cultists, eh? I don't much like the sound of that.

CHURCHWELL: A gang of superstitious misfits, obsessed with bringing her back from the dead.

DOCTOR: You think she's dead?

CHURCHWELL: A hundred years have passed.

DOCTOR: Yet you claimed the Duke has lived that long and is living still.

CHURCHWELL: That is the nature of his curse. To live a hundred years unchanging, and learn to regret her loss.

DOCTOR: I see.

CHURCHWELL: You really don't know much about us, do you, Doctor?

DOCTOR: Hmm. I know one thing. This painting here. I think I've seen it before.

CHURCHWELL: The one with the volcanoes and the foxes in overcoats?

DOCTOR: It's not exactly surrealist. It's simply out of its context. I saw it far from here. Very far. You know, it shouldn't be on this world at all.

CHURCHWELL: Really, Doctor. Er, come. I think our tour has reached its end.

DOCTOR: Churchwell, listen to me, please. What if I were to tell you that these treasures of yours needn't perish with the city after all? What if I told you I have the means to remove them and get them safely away. What would you say then?

CHURCHWELL: But the last boats have gone, Doctor. Only the dregs of us remain here. The exits to the lagoon have been sealed.

DOCTOR: Nevertheless, I have the means. I have a ship.

CHURCHWELL: But you can't have

DOCTOR: It's called the Tardis. It's trustworthy and watertight, and she's my oldest friend in the world.

CHURCHWELL: We'd have heard if there was still a boat berthed here. We would know.

DOCTOR: Like me, Churchwell, the Tardis is extremely discreet.

CHURCHWELL: And you would help me?

DOCTOR: Of course. I. Hang on, where's Charley?

CHURCHWELL: Who?

DOCTOR: The girl I came in with. She was just behind me.

CHURCHWELL: You came in alone, Doctor. I saw no one else.

DOCTOR: Charley?

(Running footsteps.)

CHURCHWELL: Doctor, wait! You must tell me. Where is this ship you told me of?

DOCTOR: (distant) Charley?

(Conversation in the background.)

PIETRO: You're honoured, Charley. We don't usually allow anyone other than family members into this place.

CHARLEY: It's a bit shabby, isn't it?

PIETRO: It's where we rest. And where we. Everyone thinks the Gondoliers are beaten into submission, that we're merely servants, a dull but sentient form of free public transport. But here, we gather and plot.

CHARLEY: I'm glad to hear it. But everyone looks half dead.

PIETRO: We're in a time of decadence and lethargy, what do you expect? We've been ground under the heel of a Duke who's ruled for a hundred years. A maligned self-indulgent Duke.

CHARLEY: Well, Pietro, that's my interest in sense of social justice piqued. Honestly Doctor, how do you always manage to get me embroiled like this? And meanwhile, I suppose he's off having his own adventures.

(Chair being moved.)

PIETRO: Sit down, Charley, and I'll tell you our history.

(Church bells still going full tilt.)

DOCTOR: Charley! No sign of her. The gondola's still here.

CHURCHWELL: It's almost dark. This is the last dusk we'll see. Doctor, you must help me.

DOCTOR: Look, Churchwell, it was very kind of me and all to show me round your pictures, but my friend has gone missing now, and I really. I'm sorry, but I don't have time to listen to your tales of curses and Dukes

CHURCHWELL: He gambled her away in a game of cards. He staked the thing he valued most, and he lost her. He has had a century to regret what he did.

DOCTOR: I'm sure it's a terrible and tragic tale and everything, but I have to be going.

CHURCHWELL: Some say Estella committed suicide thereafter by flinging herself into the Grand Canal, but with her dying breath, cursed him and this city to a hundred years more life. The Duke Orsino would live a century unaged, as indeed he has, tortured with grief and remorse.

DOCTOR: I'm not surprised. Flung herself into the Grand Canal, did you say?

CHURCHWELL: Wearing her wedding dress.

(Conversations in background.)

PIETRO: And we Gondoliers believe that the Duke searches for his beloved's remains. He does this secretly, by night. He sends his spies all over the dwindling city, and he hopes that he might bring her to life again, and so lift her curse.

CHARLEY: Bring her to life? He thinks he can do that?

PIETRO: We believe the Duke thinks he can.

CHARLEY: Wouldn't that be the best thing? If the sentence of doom was lifted then you could all carry on as before.

PIETRO: We gondoliers don't want things to carry on as before. Why would we? Would you want to be subjugated and used by a decadent aristocracy?

CHARLEY: Mmm, I see your point.

PIETRO: No. We wait, patiently for the end. We want the curse to be played out. We want the city to meet its watery fate. And then, it will be ours again.

(Walking in streets, bells ringing in the distance.)

DOCTOR: Where is she? I should never have let her out of my sight.

CHURCHWELL: The revellers will be massing soon for the final masque. You will never find her in these streets.

DOCTOR: I have to try. I brought her here. I was promising her a holiday and a lovely time, and I've gone and lost her. The last place I took her to was no picnic either, shifty and awful.

CHURCHWELL: Venice is alive with desperation and villainy of all kinds. It teems with thieves and assassins. It isn't safe for us out here. Come back with me to the museum.

DOCTOR: I can't. I only just managed to get us away alive from the last place in the nick of time. I'd never forgive myself if something happened here.

CHURCHWELL: The cultists will be out on the streets by now. They know I work for the Duke. They have pledged to destroy everything he holds dear. It isn't safe for me, Doctor!
DOCTOR: You're very jumpy, Churchwell. You're starting to make me a little nervous.
CHURCHWELL: Venice teaches you to watch your back, Doctor.

(Conversation in the background.)

CHARLEY: Look, Pietro, I must get back to the Doctor. It's late.

PIETRO: We need you, Charley. It's no accident we met.

CHARLEY: Oh, yes?

PIETRO: The revellers are all waiting for Estella to return, and the Duke strives to produce her for them. We need to put an end to his strivings. My people are content to wait for their just rewards. I, however, think we need to do something more. And you've come to me, wanting to help our cause.

CHARLEY: How can I help with that? What do you want me to do, assassinate him?

PIETRO: Go to him. He needs a decoy. Someone who can inveigle herself into the Palace, and his affections. You need to distract him as the city tears herself apart.

CHARLEY: It would have to be a rather large distraction to make him miss that.

PIETRO: We need you to become Estella, reincarnated. This you can do for us.

CHARLEY: Don't be ridiculous. I'm going.

(Sudden noises.)

PIETRO: You will do this for us, Charley. You will become the embodiment of the Duke's beloved.

(Walking.)

CHURCHWELL: Doctor. Ooh! I've got palpitations. I'm not up to all this. Tearing off into the night like this. Haven't a clue where we are now. I don't recognise anything.

DOCTOR: Round here. Follow me. Now, my geography's sketchy, naturally, I mean after everywhere I've been it would be, wouldn't it? But I've got a fantastic nose for finding my way blindly, intuitively. Oh.

CHURCHWELL: That doesn't look right, does it?

DOCTOR: It can't be a dead end. We should be back at the canal.

CHURCHWELL: I'm afraid the city loops back and orders itself out of capriciousness. The sea fog comes in and corrupts the topography at will. Every schoolchild knows that!

DOCTOR: Well, maybe if we just double back, and

CHURCHWELL: We could have stayed in the museum! It was safe there. I wish I'd locked myself in the vault in the first place. Why didn't you help me, Doctor? Why didn't you bring your ship and help me get my collection away!

DOCTOR: I'm sorry, it's too late for that. Churchwell, look.

(Footsteps.)

CHURCHWELL: Cultists. They've found us.

VINCENZO: Churchwell, at last.

CHURCHWELL: They've got us, Doctor!

DOCTOR: Now, wait you lot. Don't do anything hasty.

CHURCHWELL: You can't reason with the likes of them.

VINCENZO: So, we have you, on the eve of the anniversary of the Lady Estella's death.

Can't you see how it was all meant to be? Guards? Render them both unconscious, would you? We have you now, and it will be your honour to bear witness to her resurrection!

PART TWO

(Churchwell groans. Dripping water in background.)

CHURCHWELL: You have led me straight into their hands.

DOCTOR: What? Oh, I don't believe this. Locked up again.

CHURCHWELL: You aren't part of the cult by any chance, are you?

DOCTOR: That sort of thing has never appealed much. Too many rules. It's all a bit solemn. Going around in robes and things, chanting? That's not for me.

CHURCHWELL: But you have managed to deliver me straight into their lair.

DOCTOR: We're in their lair, are we? How fascinating. Mind you, it looks like a hundred other lairs I've been in. Dust, brick wells, old blankets, damp. I bet there are a few old rats in here too just for authentic charm.

CHURCHWELL: No one knows where this is. We could be anywhere.

DOCTOR: Knocked out, blindfolded, banged up in a cellar. It's all par for the course.

CHURCHWELL: Not for me it's not!

DOCTOR: Feels like we're under sea level. My ears are doing funny things. Are yours?

CHURCHWELL: My ears are still ringing.

DOCTOR: We're definitely under sea level. Can't you feel the tension in the air? This isn't exactly the safest place to be tonight.

CHURCHWELL: By morning we'll all be under sea level, if we don't get our throats slit first!

DOCTOR: Come on then. I think you should tell me, what are they after?

CHURCHWELL: The portrait. They think I know where the portrait of Estella is hidden.

DOCTOR: But you told me it didn't exist.

CHURCHWELL: It doesn't! But how do you convince a bunch of fanatics of that?

DOCTOR: I can see your problem. I wouldn't fancy a crowd like that dogging my footsteps.

CHURCHWELL: I've managed to keep out of their way for years. It's why I never went out into the city at night.

DOCTOR: At least you're confronting your fears now. Why do they want the picture anyway? Would it be worth going to all this bother?

CHURCHWELL: It would to them. They're frightfully mixed up in necromancy and arcane law. They believe the portrait will give them the key to resurrecting the Duke's beloved. They think they can do this tonight.

DOCTOR: There's a breeze.

CHURCHWELL: It doesn't matter if we catch a chill. We'll all be dead soon anyhow.

(Sounds of effort from the Doctor, and something crumbling. Bricks are moved.)

DOCTOR: No, I mean there's a breeze coming through a passageway. I've found our way out.

CHURCHWELL: I'll never get through that.

DOCTOR: Yes, you will. I'll help you, Churchwell. Come on. Think of it as a whole new aesthetic experience.

(Grunts from both.)

CHURCHWELL: Listen.

(Distant ritual chanting.)

DOCTOR: The distant sound of ceremonials. I wonder if they're into sacrifice as well? They usually are, that type.

CHURCHWELL: No one is quite sure what they get up to.

DOCTOR: Then let's go and find out.

VOICES: (whispers overlapping and repeating) We must hold the ceremonials at first light. The carnival will reach its final moments without us. Together at last. I am here, my Lord. You must take me, my Lord. I am returned to you. I am here to marry you once more.

(Church bells.)

CHARLEY: Oh. What did you make me drink?

PIETRO: Nothing that will harm you. Just something to make you see things from our point of view.

CHARLEY: I was already sympathetic. You didn't have to drug me.

PIETRO: Oh. Look, Charley. Look at the Palace, lighting up the canal. The final great ball has begun. What do you think of your gown, your mask? Are you surprised we peasants can conjure up such finery, even down to the jewelled slippers? This apparel has waited for you for just this night. We kept it ready for you through the long generations. We fished it from the water. Estella's very own wedding dress, and kept it prepared for this night.

CHARLEY: Thank you, but you needn't have bothered.

PIETRO: We're almost ready. Compose yourself now. You have a Duke to impress. We are here. Let me take your arm. Can't you smell disaster in the air? The whole city knows this is its last night on Earth.

CHARLEY: I don't even know what I'm supposed to do.

PIETRO: I'll lead you into the State Room, where no doubt the Duke sits lugubriously on his golden throne surrounded by his giggling lackeys and Myrmidons. I'll present you to him, they'll draw back in horror and surprise, and when you see him, you will find the words.

CHARLEY: You're quite sure of that, are you?

PIETRO: Don't talk now. Relax into the drug. They're all so keen for Estella to reappear, they'll seize upon you immediately. You in this dress, masked in this fashion. The very image of his missing beloved. Come now, follow me.

(The whispers resume.)

DOCTOR: It doesn't feel too safe down here. The walls are creaking like they're ready to burst.

CHURCHWELL: We're not going to make it out of this, are we?

DOCTOR: What kind of attitude is that? Of course we are. I've been in much worse scrapes than this, you know.

CHURCHWELL: Well, I haven't.

DOCTOR: Oh, just enjoy it. You've no idea.

CHURCHWELL: We should have stayed where we were, where they'd left us. They'll be furious to find out we've gone.

DOCTOR: In my experience, they never are. In the end, the people locking you up prefer it if they can chase after you. They love it. It provides an excuse for them to come back and rough you up a bit, you know.

CHURCHWELL: It all seems hopeless.

DOCTOR: Existential angst, eh?

CHURCHWELL: A bit.

DOCTOR: It is exciting though, isn't it? Really. Deep down you must feel a bit excited.

CHURCHWELL: What?

DOCTOR: Well, here we are at the very end of Venice. We're being hunted through the night, we're in a tunnel, there are secrets here somewhere, danger and rats.

CHURCHWELL: You do this kind of thing a lot, don't you?

DOCTOR: Most of the time.

CHURCHWELL: You're a very strange man, Doctor.

DOCTOR: Someone has to do it. Someone has to poke their noses into things.

CHURCHWELL: Why? Why can't you leave well alone?

DOCTOR: Because if I didn't, everything would just go on the same. This whole situation with everything just sinking into the water and you lot giving in, it's the perfect metaphor. I can't bear it. You you have to struggle, you have to make it better. There's corruption here, there's a whiff of something wrong.

CHURCHWELL: And you're the man to sort it out.

DOCTOR: Every time.

CHURCHWELL: You'll get yourself killed.

DOCTOR: Maybe.

CHURCHWELL: You're some kind of neurotic addict, aren't you?

DOCTOR: Certainly not, I just don't like nastiness and people getting away with it.

CHURCHWELL: That sounds a rather, if you'll forgive me, innocent view.

DOCTOR: That's as maybe, but I'm sticking to it. It's got me this far.

CHURCHWELL: Where are you from, Doctor, really?

DOCTOR: A place not too dissimilar to here. Ah. Here we are. There's an opening.

(Walking, music playing in the background.)

PIETRO: Look at them, Charley, feasting, drinking, and below their very feet the water is rising. As far as this rabble is concerned, my people are already dead. What do they care?

CHARLEY: Pietro, what have you done to me? I have no control over my legs, my whole body. It's like being inside someone else's mind.

PIETRO: You have to do this.

CHARLEY: This Duke, what's he like?

PIETRO: A weak man. An indulgent man. He's lorded it over all of us for decades.

CHARLEY: And you'll just offer me up to him, just like that.

PIETRO: I have to, Charley. My people don't all agree. They think this is foolhardy. But any chance we get, we must grasp it. And you must do this for us.

CHARLEY: But I've been your friend. I've tried to understand.

PIETRO: We can't afford to regard anyone as friends.

CHARLEY: I trusted you.

PIETRO: I don't believe in trust. Why should I? I mean, what am I to them? Just some lowly gondolier, a lower form of life. One fit merely to carry people about the place and serve them. Since when did trust mean anything?

CHARLEY: You're pushing me into the lion's den. You're handing me over to them.

PIETRO: I have to. But I will stay with you. You've listened. You care what becomes of us.

CHARLEY: What is he going to do with me?

PIETRO: I don't know.

CHARLEY: What do I say to him?

PIETRO: Shush. We're near the State Room. We're almost there.

CHARLEY: Pietro, tell me what to do.

PIETRO: You'll know. The drug will take possession of you. Just repeat what you hear in your mind. No harm will come to you.

CHARLEY: You can promise that, can you?

PIETRO: Truthfully? No, I can't. But by tomorrow morning, all who live on land are likely to be dead anyway.

CHARLEY: Oh. I was forgetting that. Oh Doctor, how did you get me into this?

PIETRO: In all likelihood your friend'll be long gone by now.

CHARLEY: He would never leave me.

PIETRO: He would if he had any sense. This city has become a poisonous place. Now, be quiet. Be still. Let the drug work its magic. For all our sakes, allow yourself to become Estella.

(Moving about, grunting. The sound of ticking.)

CHURCHWELL: You've found us another prison cell. Well done. I'm tired, Doctor. I'm an old man. I expected to die quietly with dignity tonight, not on an assault course in the underground den of a horde of religious fanatics.

DOCTOR: I don't think it's a cell. Look. It's more like a mausoleum.

CHURCHWELL: You're right. This is gold. A golden casket. Tell me that isn't a bomb.

DOCTOR: No, indeed. Look. It's a clock, counting down the hours.

CHURCHWELL: What have we walked into?

DOCTOR: I rather think that, with my usual combination of insouciance and hapless bravado, I've led us straight into the cultists' holy of holies.

CHURCHWELL: Oh, Mother of God!

DOCTOR: And do you know what I think is in this casket?

CHURCHWELL: Don't touch it!

DOCTOR: Now who's superstitious, Churchwell? You're as bad as that chanting lot out there. It's only a coffin, there's only a corpse inside.

CHURCHWELL: Doctor, don't!

DOCTOR: No, we've come this far. Look what we've found. Now, give me a hand, I want to get this thing open.

(Music playing.)

PIETRO: Almost there, Charley. Listen as they all cry out. They gasp as much at the presence of a lowly gondolier in their midst, a stinking amphibian, as much as they gasp at you.

CHARLEY: Don't pull me along. I can walk by myself.

PIETRO: Duke Orsino, listen to me. I've brought you a gift.

(Music stops.)

PIETRO: Orsino, listen to me.

ORSINO: What is this creature? How does he dare to present himself before us?

PIETRO: Look at who this creature has brought before you, Orsino.

ORSINO: Have the wretched hobgoblin removed. Throw him into the canal.

(Sudden moving forwards.)

PIETRO: Get your guards away from me. I've a knife placed ready at her back.

ORSINO: What do I care?

PIETRO: Look at her, Orsino.

ORSINO: A woman in a mask. There are hundreds here in Venice tonight. Why should I be held to ransom for the sake of one? I have my pick.

PIETRO: Now, Charley, it's time.

CHARLEY: Listen to him, Orsino. All of you, listen to me. Yes, you know me. I have returned, beloved. You know me now, don't you? Not quite as I was then, perhaps, but my essence has returned. I waited so long to be born again.

ORSINO: E-Es-Estella?

CHARLEY: That is whom you are all waiting for, isn't it? That is whom you are praying for? Then why do you look so shocked? Look. This dress. Is it not the dress I married you in?

ORSINO: It, it, it can't be you.

CHARLEY: You want me to forgive you. That's why you want me back before you, so I can tell you I don't mind that you lost me in a game of cards like you would a servant or a horse.

ORSINO: Be quiet, my love. Don't, don't. Let us talk about this in private.

CHARLEY: Everyone must hear, Orsino. Everyone must know that I forgive you, and that I have come back for you.

(Grating of stone.)

CHURCHWELL: I think we should leave it alone, Doctor.

DOCTOR: No, one more good shove should do it.

CHURCHWELL: But it's her tomb. Oh!

DOCTOR: Yes, it doesn't smell very nice, does it?

CHURCHWELL: What have we done? What have you made me do? This is desecration. They'll murder us.

DOCTOR: Stop backing away. Come back. We have to see, Churchwell. Look. We've found her.

CHURCHWELL: Her? Are you sure?

DOCTOR: It has to be.

CHURCHWELL: This is like a dream.

DOCTOR: Most things are in my experience. Now, take my arm, look inside.

CHURCHWELL: (gasps) There's nothing but dust inside. Nothing.

DOCTOR: She's already gone.

CHURCHWELL: Crumbled into nothing?

DOCTOR: No. Removed. Someone's taken her away, every scrap of her, except this.

(Clinking of metal chain.)

CHURCHWELL: Those are her jewels, her necklace.

DOCTOR: They're fantastic.

CHURCHWELL: It really was her tomb, wasn't it?

DOCTOR: It sort of looks like that, doesn't it? Here. Help me put this lid thing back. I'll take the baubles for safe keeping.

(Grating of stone. Door opens.)

VINCENZO: They are here. They are here in this sacred tomb.

DOCTOR: Oh, great.

VINCENZO: Guards, take them.

(Drawing of swords.)

VINCENZO: No. Do not kill them yet.

DOCTOR: This isn't how it looks.

VINCENZO: And how does it look, Doctor?

DOCTOR: I mean, we were just exploring and we happened upon this funny little room, and

VINCENZO: It rather looks to me that you desecrated our Lady's resting place.

DOCTOR: Have we? Is it?

VINCENZO: This casket. I can't believe even you two are so dim not to have noticed the golden sarcophagus containing her sublime, immortal remains.

DOCTOR: Oh! Would you look at that. I'd completely overlooked it. Did you see it, Churchwell?

CHURCHWELL: Er, yes.

VINCENZO: You will be put to death for this.

DOCTOR: That's rather harsh.

CHURCHWELL: They're cultists. I told you they're funny like that.

VINCENZO: You have a chance. We are not as intractable as you might think. I shall offer you a choice, the lesser of two evils.

DOCTOR: You've no right to treat us like this, you know.

VINCENZO: I shall treat you howsoever I desire, Doctor.

DOCTOR: Oh, go on, then. What's the choice you're offering us? Something crazed and dreary, I expect.

VINCENZO: Either we put you to a painful death now, or you go to beard the Duke Orsino in his depraved den.

CHURCHWELL: You want us to do your dirty work for you.

DOCTOR: Top marks, Churchwell. Fanatics never want to get their hands dirty. It's why they always wear gloves.

VINCENZO: If you retrieve the missing portrait of our Lady Estella from the Ducal palace, and bring that revered object back to us, we will allow you to live, and see the dawning of our marvellous new era.

CHURCHWELL: Oh, you fools. I've told you again and again, no such portrait exists.

DOCTOR: Of course it exists. You told me you saw it, Churchwell. You told me yourself. It was hanging up in the Ducal apartments.

CHURCHWELL: Doctor, why are you lying to them? I said no such thing.

DOCTOR: You did. You said it was as portraits go, rather nice.

VINCENZO: We knew that you were lying. We knew the portrait was there for the taking. Your friend has betrayed you, Churchwell.

DOCTOR: Yes, I do seem to have done that, don't I?

VINCENZO: Now, I command you to infiltrate the foolish Duke's ludicrous, sacrilegious ball, and bring us back the portrait. You have two hours. Go! Guards, show them the way.

(Seizing and pushing.)

ORSINO: Return to your entertainments. Fools. Leave us to talk. Gorge yourselves and dance. And when you are finally sated, then you may look upon your Duke.

MUSICIAN: Uno, due

(Music starts.)

ORSINO: You, old woman. Why do you stand staring at me like that? Don't you understand me? I said, leave us.

LAVISH: Forgive me, Your Grace. I'm Eleanor Lavish. I was given to understand that your guests could come and go as they pleased in the Palace this evening, tonight of all nights.

ORSINO: You try my patience, old woman.

LAVISH: I am only here to pay my respects, my Lord.

ORSINO: Nevertheless, I have business to attend to, with this troll gondolier, and

PIETRO: And the Duke's beloved, the reincarnation of his lost Duchess, Estella.

ORSINO: Why should I listen to you? A troglodyte, a web-footed scavenger. Who are you to return her to me?

PIETRO: You know the legend.

ORSINO: Put about by those demented priests, who claim they worship my beloved. What do they know?

PIETRO: They did say Estella would return on this night, brought into your realm by the lowliest of the low. Hmph. I'm the lowliest here, obviously. Pietro, at your service.

ORSINO: Estella? Is it really you?

CHARLEY: It is, my Lord.

ORSINO: You recognise me? You forgive me?

PIETRO: My Lady will be satisfied with nothing less than your plighting yourself to her once more. You must believe in her, Orsino. You must marry her again at dawn in full sight of your people.

ORSINO: No. It's a trick. It's all some ghastly trick. You can't be Estella, after all this time. I'm not sure I'd recognise her, even if she did come traipsing back in here in gilded jewelled slippers.

CHARLEY: I am here, Lord.

ORSINO: I'm an old man. I may not look it, because of the curse you placed on my head, but inside, my mind is as frangible and decayed as any of the Palaces along the Grand Canal. Of course, I'd seize at the chance of your forgiving me. I've grown so weary of this hideously prolonged life of mine. I've even dreamed of dying naturally, at last, when this night came. Of course, I would pray that you'd return, as the cultists always warned. I prayed that we would find each other again, be able to die at last, blissfully, together. But, can it be you?

PIETRO: Can you take the chance that it isn't?

ORSINO: What do you mean, toad?

PIETRO: If you reject her, my Lord, then what will happen? Look about you. These revellers, this horde of pleasure-hungry dilettantes. They're only here to see the fulfilment of the curse, and to discover whether the legends are true. What will happen if they're not appeased? Can you imagine an end to this affair in the dawn, in which there's no climax, no wonderful dénouement? Ms Lavish, wouldn't you be disappointed?

LAVISH: I never truly believed the legend. But even so, I would be disappointed.

PIETRO: Hmph. Listen to the people of your city, Orsino. Even this old woman has an opinion.

ORSINO: I see what you mean.

(The voices whisper to Charley, and she repeats what they say.)

CHARLEY: You must take me, my Lord. We must hold the ceremonials at first light. The carnival must reach its final moment with us together at last, to appease the masked rabble you've assembled.

ORSINO: But are you she? I must know for sure.

CHARLEY: All that matters is that I am convincing. I must convince them or they will turn on

you. Isn't that what you have fretted over, more than your desire to actually see me again?

ORSINO: Perhaps.

CHARLEY: Selfish as ever, my Lord. Nevertheless, you will marry me.

ORSINO: I

PIETRO: I don't see that you have much choice.

ORSINO: Then I have found you, reborn. I no longer need to scour the city for your mortal remains. Your old body can go to the fishes for all I care. I have you at last. Estella.

CHARLEY: You have.

ORSINO: We must prepare for the nuptials. You remember where your apartments are, of course?

CHARLEY: I think I

PIETRO: I'll take her.

ORSINO: You will need help. You, old woman. You will help this lady to prepare for the dawn.

LAVISH: Oh! So I have my uses now, do I? So now you can start ordering me around?

ORSINO: You will do as I command. Take her. Take my beloved and her toad, and prepare for our marriage.

LAVISH: Your beloved?

ORSINO: She has returned to me. She has come to me, with forgiveness.

(Priests chanting about Estella in the background.)

DOCTOR: At least they've got a nice laparetto. We're travelling in style today, Churchwell.

CHURCHWELL: We're stuck with them now, Doctor. Stuck with the whole retinue of mad chanting priests, on a boat. All of them worshipping a body that isn't even where they think it is.

DOCTOR: Keep your voice down. We don't want them to know, do we?

CHURCHWELL: But they must know already. They must.

DOCTOR: They wouldn't desecrate the tomb. As far as these dupes are concerned, Estella's still inside the thing. They'll get a nasty surprise when they expect her to come tripping out. Did you notice the clock?

CHURCHWELL: What about it?

DOCTOR: It was ticking down the hours and the minutes to dawn. Presumably that's when it all happens.

CHURCHWELL: We're all going to die horribly, aren't we? One way or another.

DOCTOR: I should never have let you get mixed up in all of this. I've lost Charley. She could be anywhere. She isn't used to things like this. Anything could have happened to her.

VINCENZO: Behold, the Ducal Palace.

CHURCHWELL: We have nothing to fear from the Duke, Doctor. These idiots are taking us to safety. He's my friend. He won't betray us.

DOCTOR: How can you be so sure? I don't like what I've heard about him so far.

CHURCHWELL: Oh, they're delivering us to safety, Doctor, I'm sure of it. And your friend, the girl, will turn up, and you can find your ship, the one you told me about, and we can leave this doomed city in time with all the paintings. We can rescue the whole collection, can't we? Can't we, Doctor? You said yourself it would be a crime if the paintings were spoiled. We'll be safe, won't we?

DOCTOR: I'll get us all to safety, Churchwell, you'll see.

CHURCHWELL: They're taking us in. The carnival is at its height.

VINCENZO: Prepare yourselves, servants of our Lady. Make ready to set about your tasks.

DOCTOR: Why do religious types always regale you with histrionic comparatives? It's hard to get any kind of decent conversation out of them.

VINCENZO: Silence, Doctor!

DOCTOR: That's the other thing. They always shout.

VINCENZO: Silence.

DOCTOR: As if they're the only ones worth listening to. Fanatics always get on my nerves.

CHURCHWELL: Oh, don't aggravate them, Doctor.

DOCTOR: I can't see what they want some old portrait for, anyway. Are they very keen on art?

CHURCHWELL: I told you. There are dark powers at work here.

DOCTOR: Great. That makes me much happier. Now I'm meant to be scared of something I don't even believe in.

(Door opens. Footsteps.)

CHARLEY: Oh, no one's been in here for years. It's thick with dust. Look at the state of it.

LAVISH: No one's been in for exactly a hundred years, that's the point.

(Door closes.)

CHARLEY: You'd think they'd have kept it tidier though, Miss Lavish. It's hardly respectful, is it?

PIETRO: We can rest here. Rest and think.

CHARLEY: Well, thank you, Pietro. Thanks for everything. What do I do? I show a smidgen of interest in the plight of the underclass, and what do I get in return? Held at knife point, dressed up in an admittedly fabulous but impractical frock, and then I end up being forced to marry some ancient madman as the city collapses around us. This isn't what I would call a fantastic night out.

PIETRO: Be quiet. I have to think.

CHARLEY: Oh, yes. And you drug and hypnotise me so I end up playing along and coming out with all kinds of nonsense. I'm not happy, Pietro. I hope you know that.

LAVISH: You're that girl, aren't you? The one I saw in the pensione before with that friend of yours, that drunken impertinent sot in the green velvet coat?

CHARLEY: He wasn't drunk. That's just his way.

LAVISH: What are you doing, girl, impersonating the Duchess? Are you mad? Do you realise what you're getting into?

PIETRO: You heard what Orsino said, old woman. He doesn't care. So long as it convinces the people, he'll play along. What else would you expect from a weak and corrupt ruler like him?

CHARLEY: Yes, but now he expects me to die along with him at the crack of dawn, along with everyone else. Well, that's just fantastic. You didn't tell me about that bit, did you?

PIETRO: I hadn't realised he was so corrupt and weak and

CHARLEY: Lunatic? He's a lunatic. We must all be to be here so late.

LAVISH: I suppose at one level, we all thought the Duke might rescue us somehow. That the curse would be miraculously lifted. Amazing, isn't it? We still believed in him, after everything. After a hundred years of his self-indulgence and corruption and malignancy, we still believed he could save us. Perhaps we all deserve to sink into the sea.

CHARLEY: Well, I am pleased you joined us on this venture, Miss Lavish. You're really cheering me up.

LAVISH: I'm sorry, my dear. I do have these philosophical turns.

CHARLEY: They're not helping matters. We need this curse affair, whatever it is, lifted.

PIETRO: Only the true Estella could do that.

CHARLEY: So they're expecting me to save them all. In the end, because of the situation you've put me in, they're all going to look to me. Pietro, what am I going to do?

(Chanting from cultists in the background.)

DOCTOR: There's something here I'm not quite piecing together, something I've missed.

CHURCHWELL: I wouldn't worry your head.

DOCTOR: Hang on, hang on. You? Yes, you.

VINCENZO: Are you addressing me?

DOCTOR: What do you think you can accomplish with this portrait, hmm? Or do you just want to see what the old girl looked like?

VINCENZO: You blaspheme. You are not fit to mention her name.

DOCTOR: Oh, probably not. I'd just like to know what you think you're up to, that's all.

VINCENZO: You will do my bidding, and that is as much as you need to know.

DOCTOR: All right, all right. Say you manage somehow through the forces of sorcery and devilment and so on to revive Estella from the dead. What happens then, hmm? What's she going to do?

VINCENZO: She will save us all. She will make the city rise from the sea again.

DOCTOR: That's a pretty tall order for someone just back from the dead. I should know. It's a very taxing business. Usually it's as much as you can do to remember your name. I wouldn't expect any more than this. I imagine she'd feel rather tired and confused.

VINCENZO: The legend has come down to us from the last century. Three generations of priests have handed down the tale. We know what is ordained to happen.

DOCTOR: Really, a century, isn't that long for a legend. It isn't that long at all. Come on, you must have some doubts, surely, niggling away. Don't you think you're going to look a little foolish?

VINCENZO: You know nothing. How can you know anything about us? How can you understand a century's worth of worshipping our Lady?

DOCTOR: I've never been very religious it's true, but I think you are going to be
(Alarmed shouts.)

DOCTOR: To be disappointed. What's going on?

CHURCHWELL: It's the priests. They've seen something.

VINCENZO: What? Stop, you fools. Control yourselves.

DOCTOR: What is it? What can they see?

CHURCHWELL: Doctor, look. There's something under there. Just under the surface of the water.

DOCTOR: We're being attacked. They're coming up from under the boat.

VINCENZO: Kill them. Get them away from us.

DOCTOR: What are they?

VINCENZO: Amphibians. Trolls. Myrmidons.

DOCTOR: Churchwell, give me your hand.

(Splashing.)

CHURCHWELL: Gondoliers!

DOCTOR: Churchwell, grab my hand. The others, the priests, they're being dragged down.

CHURCHWELL: They'll kill us all. The Gondoliers, they've gone mad. They'll drag us all down into the depths!

PART THREE

LAVISH: Of course, Charley. We're missing all the excitement up here. The biggest do that any of us have ever seen.

PIETRO: I've no hankering to see the spoiled upper classes at play. We've heard tales of the Duke's depravities.

LAVISH: Oh come, Pietro, it's our last night on Earth. Surely you can enjoy yourself a little?

PIETRO: I have no intention of dying, Ms Lavish. None of the Gondoliers or their families have. How often you've called us amphibians, toads, fish people. Yet none of you suspected the truth.

LAVISH: Which is?

PIETRO: That we really are fish people. We have evolved. Many of our people have made their homes under the surface already. The rest of us will join them once the sea has risen to close over the tallest of Venice's spires. We've nothing to fear, you see.

LAVISH: What a quiet, gentle revolution you've been planning.

PIETRO: Do you blame us? After centuries of subjugation by the likes of the Duke? After the past hundred years of decadence?

LAVISH: So the city will devolve to the likes of you? Well, we deserve no better. But you've drawn this poor girl into your schemes. That hardly seems fair. What are you trying to do? Make everyone doubly miserable as the sea washes in?

PIETRO: Well, this mission does seem somewhat foolhardy now. We thought the Duke would use his last hours to search for Estella's remains. The more superstitious amongst us thought he might succeed in revoking the curse.

LAVISH: Nothing can revoke the curse.

PIETRO: Nevertheless, Duke Orsino needs a distraction, a placebo, and Charley here was to provide it.

CHARLEY: It's nice to feel wanted, especially since the Doctor seems to have abandoned me. But really, I hope you won't be dreadfully offended if I just slip away quietly and make my escape.

(Starting to walk off.)

PIETRO: Charley, don't.

CHARLEY: I'm not staying around here, Pietro. The effects of that noxious potion you forced down me seem to have worn off. I can think straight again. I'm going.

PIETRO: You'll spoil everything.

CHARLEY: Look, Pietro, you saw the Duke. Did he look like someone who's working against the clock to rescue the city? No, of course he didn't. He's sitting on his throne and he doesn't care a jot. He isn't lifting a finger to rescue the place. He doesn't need a distraction. The city will fall, and it will all be yours. You don't need me to help. I'm going.

PIETRO: Charley.

CHARLEY: What?

PIETRO: Let me come with you.

LAVISH: I'll come too. You two young people seem a bit hapless to me.

CHARLEY: Come on, then, quietly.

(Opening a door.)

CHARLEY: He hasn't put any guards on the corridor.

(Coughing.)

MAN 1: Hey! Hey!

MAN 2: Over here!

MAN 1: Hoi!

MAN 2: Take hold of the rope. Over here!

CHURCHWELL: Oh, Mother of God, thank you. We're saved, Doctor. Look, it's Orsino's guards. We were close enough to the Palace. They're pulling us in.

DOCTOR: What was that?

CHURCHWELL: I said we're saved.

DOCTOR: Oh, hurrah.

CHURCHWELL: The boat was smashed to matchwood. We're lucky to be alive. I don't know if our captors have. Oh.

VINCENZO: Saved. I am saved. The spirit of our Lady Estella has spared my soul. I live, and stand once more on dry land.

CHURCHWELL: I think you'll find, Vincenzo, that it was the Duke's guards who dragged your stinking carcass out of the canal. Where are the others? Did they all drown?

VINCENZO: They have been murdered by those toads, the Gondoliers, sucked into the depths of the lagoon. No matter. I have plenty more where they came from.

CHURCHWELL: Of course you have, back at the old secret base. But remember, Vincenzo, I know where your lair is. I know where the casket is hidden.

VINCENZO: I could kill you now.

CHURCHWELL: You need me to bargain with the Duke. (singing) You need me ali-ive!

DOCTOR: Look, boys, can we stop quibbling and shivering outside? I'm completely soaked. Shall we just go into the Palace and carry this on in there?

VINCENZO: Into the heart of depravity and decay?

DOCTOR: So long as I get a cup of tea I don't mind where we go. Come on.

(Walking off.)

(Music playing. Walking.)

PIETRO: Charley, pretend to be hypnotised again, in case anyone sees us.

CHARLEY: Oh, marvellous. The Doctor's really going to get a stiff talking-to when I see him again.

LAVISH: You may have your chance, my dear. Look!

DOCTOR: Duke Orsino, we're here.

(Gasps from the people.)

DOCTOR: Hello, everyone. Duke Orsino, we've come to talk with you.

ORSINO: Is this any way to come before the Grand Duke?

DOCTOR: Probably not, but we've been having a pretty hair-raising time of it lately. It's nice to see you, by the way. You seem to be at the centre of this whole affair. I like to get to where the action's going on.

ORSINO: This is merely a small party for a few friends. I'm sure I don't know what you're talking about. Churchwell, explain yourself. How does it come to be that you dredge yourself into my State Room looking like death itself? Who are these peculiar ill-bred persons you

bring with you?

CHURCHWELL: That will take some explaining, Your Grace.

ORSINO: Do hurry. We haven't a great deal of time left. It's the middle of the night.

VINCENZO: Enough of this. I am High Priest Vincenzo of the Order of our Lady Estella.

ORSINO: Are you really? You lot have given me quite a bit of bother over the years, you know. How nice of you to deliver yourself up to me like this. Guards?

(Moving forwards. Gasps from people as glass smashes. The music stops.)

VINCENZO: Unhand me. I am here to make a bargain.

ORSINO: I don't see that you're in any position to make a bargain, Priest. How dare you worship my beloved. How dare you offer up to her memory the dubious compliment of your tawdry prayers.

CHURCHWELL: Your Grace, it might so happen that he does indeed have something to bargain with.

ORSINO: Oh? Really? Then tell me.

DOCTOR: You may be rather interested in what the High Priest has to offer, Orsino. You see, in his underwater den, which we've only just come from, he's got a casket.

ORSINO: A casket, you say?

VINCENZO: Containing her immortal remains. You fool. You have search for years and never came close. We had her the whole time, and you never even knew.

ORSINO: You have her? You have my beloved?

DOCTOR: He's got all sorts of things in that lair of his.

(Lavish laughs.)

LAVISH: Things have rather taken an unexpected turn.

PIETRO: Oh, no.

CHARLEY: You're not telling me that the real Estella's turned up? That's all we need.

PIETRO: Your friend the Doctor seems to be behind this, Charley. He's causing quite a stir.

CHARLEY: He's very good at that. Now quiet, both of you. Let me think.

DOCTOR: Essentially we're here before you under duress, Orsino. The High Priest here, the delightful Vincenzo, has urged us here to bargain with you over the small matter of a portrait.

ORSINO: Churchwell is my curator. You should direct all such queries to him. I have no time for art tonight.

DOCTOR: It's a very special portrait, you see, Your Grace.

ORSINO: Do go on, Doctor. I have no idea who you are, but you are being extremely diverting.

DOCTOR: You flatter me.

ORSINO: You'll be even more diverting as a human sacrifice when I have your gizzards ceremonially removed during my nuptials at dawn.

DOCTOR: Gizzards?

CHURCHWELL: Nuptials?

ORSINO: I am to be married at dawn, with my people in attendance. We will all be there. It will be Venice's crowning glory.

VINCENZO: And who are you marrying? How dare you marry again!

ORSINO: Oh, you really do bore me, you fervent little man.

DOCTOR: I have no interest in your love life, Orsino. I'm concerned only with this business of the portrait.

ORSINO: You muddle me and fuddle me with all your requests. I hardly know who to

believe. All of you, leave me to think in peace.

DOCTOR: I know. I often feel like that. But really, Orsino, we haven't much time.

ORSINO: Why should I listen to any of you? I've had a hundred years of isolation and inactivity, of grotesquely prolonged life, and then suddenly, you all turn up at once, telling me you have found my beloved's remains. Why should I believe you at all?

VINCENZO: We have had the casket ever since our Lady took her own life. She entrusted it to our care. She created her own cult when she gave her remains into the care of my grandfather.

ORSINO: Churchwell, I know you. You serve me. Have you seen this casket?

CHURCHWELL: I have seen the casket, yes.

DOCTOR: We both have, Orsino. We have been there.

(Walking down steps.)

ORSINO: I must go. I must see her.

VINCENZO: You seek to enter our domain?

ORSINO: Venice is mine. I go where I wish.

VINCENZO: Not into the sacred domain, Duke Orsino. Not even you. Especially not you. It was on your account that our Lady took her own life.

(Walking back up.)

ORSINO: I loved her, you fool. I loved her more than you or any of your lackeys could ever understand. You claim to worship her, and yet you keep her from me. You have no idea what passed between us.

VINCENZO: We know that you betrayed her. Were she to return to Earth this morning, she would want nothing more to do with you.

ORSINO: You know nothing. Churchwell, Doctor, you must take me there. Show me where she lies.

DOCTOR: Er, there is still the matter of the portrait? Fair's fair, Orsino, that's your part of the bargain. I think you'd better have a think about where you left it.

ORSINO: There never was any portrait.

CHURCHWELL: I tried to tell them. If anyone had known about such an object then as curator, I would.

ORSINO: Shut up, Churchwell.

DOCTOR: Yes, that reminds me. It's a very interesting collection of paintings you have over there in Churchwell's museum, Your Grace. I was pleased to see them. I thought they were very interesting indeed. Obviously I'm not speaking as an expert. Well, not much of one anyway.

ORSINO: Are you prattling at me again?

DOCTOR: You see, I recognised one or two of them. And I recognised one or two of the places depicted in them.

CHURCHWELL: Your Grace, I don't think the Doctor quite understands what surrealism is all about.

ORSINO: Poor thing.

DOCTOR: On the contrary, I understand all too well. how could I not? The thing is, some of the paintings I saw yesterday evening are not from this world at all.

ORSINO: And where are they from, Doctor? Outer space?

DOCTOR: Well, of course.

ORSINO: (laughs) I'll waste no more time with you. Churchwell, tell me where this domain of

the cult lies. I must know. I must find her remains.

LAVISH: Make way. Make way for his Grace's divine intended.

DOCTOR: Charley!

ORSINO: What is this?

PIETRO: She couldn't bear to be parted from you any longer, Your Grace.

ORSINO: Return to your apartments at once, you witch. The night isn't over yet.

CHARLEY: I had to come down. I knew something was going on.

VINCENZO: This is the woman you intend to marry? This is your second Duchess?

PIETRO: The first Duchess. This person is Estella, reincarnated.

VINCENZO: You blaspheme. How can this be Estella?

DOCTOR: But that's Charley.

LAVISH: Oh, well done.

ORSINO: Oh, you know this woman, do you, Doctor?

DOCTOR: Yes. No. Er, Charley, what's happening?

CHARLEY: I am to be joined with the Duke at dawn.

ORSINO: No matter. Whether she is known to you or not, whether she is a genuine reincarnation or not, what matters is the spectacle. And spectacle there shall be, when I marry her at dawn.

VINCENZO: No! You cannot!

ORSINO: Guards!

(Running, seizing.)

ORSINO: Pass me a blade.

(Slash. Vincenzo cries out.)

ORSINO: Oh, don't gasp. I wouldn't kill him. No, he has to return with me to his wonderfully elusive lair, and divulge to me his glorious secrets, and show me Estella's ineffable remains. I wouldn't have killed him for all the world. But I would have him bleed copiously, of course. And experience a terrific amount of pain, the cur.

VINCENZO: You will pay for that, Your Grace.

LAVISH: Stop this. Stop lashing out at each other.

ORSINO: What is this? Know your place, old woman, and shut your mouth!

DOCTOR: I'd do as he says, Ms Lavish. He's pretty handy with that knife.

LAVISH: What do you know, Doctor? Ever since you turned up, there's been nothing but disaster.

CHURCHWELL: It's true, you know. Ever since I clapped eyes on the Doctor my life's been hell.

ORSINO: Will someone take this obstreperous hag away?

LAVISH: No. You listen to me, you men. You're all fighting each other, but the fact remains that this city and all of us will be dead within a matter of hours. By the time the sun rises again, in fact. Why should you fight each other? What's the point?

DOCTOR: She's right, you know. Why don't we all listen to Eleanor Lavish? Are you all right, Vincenzo?

VINCENZO: What concern is that of yours, infidel?

DOCTOR: Of course I'm concerned. I hate seeing people get hurt, even horrible people.

CHURCHWELL: It does seem rather futile to fight while the city is sinking into the sea.

ORSINO: I don't care, Churchwell. I've got things to sort out. Out of my way.

(Walking off.)

CHARLEY: Where are you going, my Lord?

DOCTOR: Why are you calling him my Lord? Has he got you hypnotised or something, Charley? I'll take a very dim view of this, Orsino, if you've been hypnotising my companion.

ORSINO: My intended will accompany us. She must be there when I gaze upon the last shreds and tatters of her previous human form.

CHARLEY: Oh, marvellous. Let's wrap up this dreadful night by looking at a dead body.

LAVISH: Duke Orsino, if you leave this Palace and go to the cult's domain, there will be worse bloodshed this night.

ORSINO: You believe you're a very wise old woman, don't you, Ms

LAVISH: Lavish. Eleanor Lavish.

ORSINO: Ah yes. And at my service, eh?

LAVISH: Not quite.

ORSINO: You amuse me, you hag.

LAVISH: Hag indeed.

ORSINO: (announcing) Everyone, I am to be gone for a few hours till daybreak. I shall return for my wedding at dawn. But until then, and because it amuses me, I will place upon my throne in my glorious stead, this elderly harridan, for you to bow down before.

LAVISH: Your Grace does me honour.

(Some applause.)

ORSINO: Take up the throne, Ms Lavish.

LAVISH: With pleasure.

(Music starts up again. Footsteps)

ORSINO: And the rest of you follow me. Bring that dog of a priest. Prepare the ducal barge.

DOCTOR: Let's travel in style, let's raise a glass as we steam down the canal. And before the world ends, it turns completely upside down.

CHURCHWELL: Doctor, come on. You got me into this.

(Water lapping.)

PIETRO: You can hear the buildings rumbling and groaning. The very stone is about to rip apart like silk. The foundations are sinking, as we sail down through it all. And listen to him. Listen to the Duke laughing like a maniac.

DOCTOR: It's probably all been a bit much for him, Pietro. Now perhaps you wouldn't mind explaining to me why Charley here is dressed up like this.

PIETRO: It was my idea.

DOCTOR: Why is she going to marry him? Did she just get carried away? Or is it just that thing of hers about jumping in at the deep end? Because if it is, I think she's gone a bit too far.

CHARLEY: Er, you could ask me, Doctor.

DOCTOR: Oh. You're not hypnotised?

CHARLEY: I faked it. It seemed the simplest way.

DOCTOR: Charley, what has been happening since you ran out on me?

CHARLEY: Ran out on you? I could say the same thing.

DOCTOR: All right, let's just say we were separated during all the hullabaloo. I got caught up with our friendly cult and their stashed revenants, and meanwhile you seem to have got yourself rather involved.

CHARLEY: He made me do it.

DOCTOR: Pietro? Yes, I came across some of your pals earlier. They attacked our ship. They tried to get us into the water but we weren't very keen.

PIETRO: My people are eager to take over, Doctor. Tomorrow the city will be theirs. Can you blame them for agitating?

DOCTOR: I can when it involves me almost drowning and Charley here getting marched to the altar.

PIETRO: They're all around us, you know, just under the surface. I can sense them following the ducal barge. They will attack.

CHARLEY: Oh, marvellous. Doctor, when you invited me to join you on these trips, you never said anything about marauding amphibians and enforced marriages to noble lunatics.

DOCTOR: Yes, I should have really. It's always the way, but I always manage to get us away at the right moment, Charley, you watch. It'll all sort itself out.

CHARLEY: Oh, like it did on that last hellish place you took me too?

DOCTOR: That's right.

CHARLEY: I don't find that very reassuring.

DOCTOR: At least we're seeing history made.

CHARLEY: I still don't relish the thought of looking at a dead body. It's not my idea of fun.

DOCTOR: Ah, but there's the funny thing.

PIETRO: What?

DOCTOR: You'll see.

(Walking.)

ORSINO: Their domain was right under our noses the whole time, Churchwell. On the left bank, as we always thought.

CHURCHWELL: Your Grace, I would advise caution. The High Priest is acquiescing far too easily. It looks to me very much like a trap.

ORSINO: My tactical advisor are you now, eh, Churchwell?

CHURCHWELL: I wouldn't presume.

ORSINO: Good.

VINCENZO: We are approaching the place. Are you ready to descend?

ORSINO: And see the remains of my beloved? Of course I am.

VINCENZO: We have not much time.

DOCTOR: Perhaps this isn't very practical. I mean, do you really believe you can do anything if, if, when you find her? She might not be too pleased at you waking her up, you know? Why don't we try something else? We could pool our resources.

ORSINO: Churchwell, how have you stood spending time with this fool?

DOCTOR: We could find out who's still here in Venice. My ship is quite large inside, and we could

CHARLEY: Doctor, they aren't listening to you.

DOCTOR: They have to. They're sailing into an even worse situation. I've got to try and make them see sense. Things are bad enough without them opening graves.

CHARLEY: You know something, don't you?

DOCTOR: They're not going to like what they find, and I don't think it's going to help anyone if Orsino leads us all down into the clutches of the High Priest and his cult.

CHARLEY: We'll have to go with him. He'll make us. We're never going to get out again, are we?

DOCTOR: Don't worry, I'll think of something, you'll see.

(Music playing.)

LAVISH: I don't suppose he'll mind if we empty out his wine cellars. Look at you all, you masked fools, still dancing round. I should pity you. You don't really have a clue what's going on in your midst, do you? None of you can see what is about to happen. Well, go on, dance. Enjoy yourselves while you still can. And you, Eleanor. You were expecting a quiet closure to this debacle. You wanted to sink gracefully into the green waves at the end. How does it happen that you are on the ducal throne, watching from the very centre? How have you allowed yourself to be caught up like this, as the others descend into the lair of the cult, to peer into the golden sarcophagus and find. Ah, but what will they find?

DOCTOR: Wonderful. Burning torches and leaping shadows. This is more like it. Here, Charley, cop hold of this torch and follow me.

CHARLEY: I know you're just acting all casual in order to reassure me, Doctor.

(Walking forwards.)

DOCTOR: Am I?

CHARLEY: You're trying to make it seem like a great adventure.

DOCTOR: You're right.

CHARLEY: Really, you're as worried as I am.

DOCTOR: Just a bit. I don't like being in the hands of people as obsessed as this. Makes me jumpy. Pietro, how are you doing?

PIETRO: Petrified for my life.

DOCTOR: Well look, at least Orsino and the others have gone ahead first. Nothing can harm us.

CHARLEY: You don't believe that? We're walking down a tunnel into a tomb.

DOCTOR: Just think of it all as some kind of phantasm, a peculiar dream you're having.

CHARLEY: That works, does it?

DOCTOR: Why do you think I'm always so calm and collected?

CHARLEY: But you aren't.

(Churchwell cries out.)

CHARLEY: What's that? That was Churchwell, up ahead.

CHURCHWELL: Let go of me. Let me. Doctor! Doctor, they've got me.

ORSINO: What is this? Unhand me.

VINCENZO: Seize them. Seize them all.

CHURCHWELL: Let go of me!

ORSINO: Stop whining, Churchwell.

DOCTOR: Quickly, back up this way.

(Walking quickly.)

CHARLEY: Doctor.

PIETRO: I can't see. Where?

VINCENZO: Take them all to the chamber of our Lady.

ORSINO: There are hundreds of them. I had no idea.

DOCTOR: Churchwell, are you wounded?

CHURCHWELL: Scratched, that's all.

DOCTOR: They've got us hemmed in.

VINCENZO: I have many more followers than you knew. You cannot stop us, Orsino, any of you. You are all here now. You are here to do my bidding. Now, descend with us to the catacombs, where our Lady awaits.

(Walking.)

CHARLEY: They've got us. I knew they would.

DOCTOR: There's still a way, Charley. I can still get them to talk to each other.

PIETRO: They'll never talk. The Duke will never talk with the cultists. They all dress in fine clothes and pretend they're civilised, but really they're savages.

CHURCHWELL: I'm inclined to think you're right. But your people are no better.

PIETRO: My people are desperate, and rash.

DOCTOR: Shush. The tunnel's coming to an end. Listen. Ticking. We've reached the tomb. They're taking us in.

CHARLEY: In those robes, it's almost as if they have no faces.

DOCTOR: Then don't look at them, Charley. Take my hand. It looks like they're leading us in.

VINCENZO: Bring the prisoners in. Bow down. Make them all bow down before her casket.

ORSINO: I will stand, Vincenzo. I see no reason to make obsequies before her.

(Chanting in background.)

VINCENZO: In this chamber, Orsino, you will address me as Lord. Here I rule. You will do as I bid you.

DOCTOR: Just do as they say for now, Orsino. Let them have their little ceremonials. They seem to like that kind of thing.

ORSINO: She was my wife, Doctor. They've taken her away from me and made her into some kind of goddess.

DOCTOR: Yes, you'll be feeling very much like I always think Liza Minelli must have felt about her mother. Imagine having Judy Garland for a mother. Living in the shadow of an icon like that must be hard.

ORSINO: What?

CHURCHWELL: We're all going to die. They'll slit our throats.

VINCENZO: Listen. Listen to the clock. See how the hands strain to meet on the hour, the ordained hour.

DOCTOR: That's more like it, Vincenzo. I knew you'd manage grandiloquence if you tried. More!

CHARLEY: Doctor, don't aggravate them.

DOCTOR: I'm trying to distract them.

VINCENZO: Only a matter of minutes until we face our dread destiny.

DOCTOR: Bravo.

CHARLEY: That's the casket, is it? That's where she is?

DOCTOR: Er, well, just wait and see.

VINCENZO: In moments, the bells will ring out, and the casket will split asunder.

CHURCHWELL: Mother of God.

ORSINO: Pull yourself together, Churchwell.

CHURCHWELL: You don't understand, Your Grace.

DOCTOR: Pietro, what?

CHARLEY: He's trying to get away.

PIETRO: Doctor, Charley, this way.

DOCTOR: Charley, come on, we're leaving.

(Moving off.)

VINCENZO: Leave them. We have far more important matters to attend to.

ORSINO: But I still need the woman.

VINCENZO: Everything we need is in here.

(Breathless.)

CHARLEY: Well done, Pietro. I didn't much fancy being down there when they opened that coffin.

DOCTOR: Neither did I. But I haven't explained why not yet, have I?

CHARLEY: What do you mean by that?

DOCTOR: Hopefully we'll not be around to see. Pietro, I'm lost. Can you remember how to get to the exit?

CHARLEY: You always get lost. Every single time.

PIETRO: Round here. This way. I can smell the canal.

(Walking.)

DOCTOR: The dawn's coming up. Can you see the air lightening? It's softer.

(Distant cries.)

CHARLEY: What's that noise?

DOCTOR: This is it. This is the exit. Oh no, look.

CHARLEY: It's the Gondoliers. They're massing.

PIETRO: They followed the barge. They're after the Duke. No, they're attacking us.

DOCTOR: We've no choice. Back, back down the stairs.

PIETRO: Back into the tomb?

CHARLEY: What choice have we got? Look at your people, Pietro, they're mad. Do you think they'd spare us? Come on.

(Ticking continues and chanting.)

VINCENZO: You, Duke Orsino. You must come forward as the hour reaches its zenith. We have foretold how you will step up to the casket as it breaks apart at dawn on the final day.

(Footsteps.)

ORSINO: I will. I will come and stand by you.

VINCENZO: You must come to gaze upon what remains of your beloved. As the curse reaches its apotheosis, you must stare upon what you yourself have caused.

DOCTOR: Stop. You mustn't go through with this. It isn't how you think.

CHARLEY: Doctor?

DOCTOR: Stop, I'm telling you, come away from there.

CHARLEY: Doctor, what are you doing?

DOCTOR: You don't understand, Charley. If they open that thing now there'll be even more bloodshed.

ORSINO: It is the hour. Open the golden casket.

(Stone scraps. Gasps.)

VINCENZO: What? It is empty.

ORSINO: Empty? How can it be?

VINCENZO: Empty. Empty. Empty!

CHARLEY: Doctor?

DOCTOR: I tried to tell them, I tried. Look. The hands of the clock are meeting.

(The ticking stops. Chimes start.)

CHARLEY: That's it, then. It's dawn.

DOCTOR: And the clock chimes out for the death of Venice.

PART FOUR

(Band music playing and party sounds eventually replaced by screams.)

LAVISH: You must all listen to me. The Duke put me in command in his stead. As a joke, perhaps. As a ludicrous indulgent jest. But in the meantime, I order you, I beseech you to put an end to these drunken revels. Listen. Outside, Venice is sinking. Look at the light coming through the tall windows. It is dawn. You are all in great danger. This foolishness has been allowed to go on far too long. Do you all really want to die? Are you really waiting for our Lady Estella to rise from the grave and rescue you all? Hah! Oh, that was a foolish dream. She isn't returning. Your own Duke has left you all to the mercies of the lagoon. The curse is reaching its fulfilment. Flee for your lives! On the other hand, there isn't anywhere left for you to flee. It's far too late for all of that. Strike up the band, boys.

(A jaunty tune starts to be played by the band.)

(Distant sounds of panic and chaos.)

DOCTOR: The city is falling down around your ears. Listen. Forget your petty squabbles now.

ORSINO: But where has she gone? What have you done? Vincenzo, what have you done with her?

VINCENZO: Blasphemy. Someone has removed the blessed revenants.

DOCTOR: Forget about that. We'll all be revenants soon.

CHURCHWELL: I tried to warn you, Your Grace. I tried to tell you.

ORSINO: Venice dies, and with the dawn comes a new age.

CHARLEY: A new age without your precious Estella. What are you going to do without her?

PIETRO: Charley, leave them be.

CHURCHWELL: We looked. We saw she had gone. We tried to warn you.

ORSINO: You knew, Churchwell? You knew she had been stolen?

CHURCHWELL: The Doctor. He made me open the casket. He forced me to look inside, the ghoul. All we saw was dust.

ORSINO: Is this true, Doctor?

DOCTOR: Well, yes, I was interested. I only had a peep.

ORSINO: You knew she was gone and you still let me come here? Wait. Where is the necklace? Where are her jewels? Vincenzo, you scourge. What have you done with her jewels?

VINCENZO: The answer seemed so plain to me. Why hadn't we foreseen this?

ORSINO: What are you talking about, man?

DOCTOR: (sotto) Let's start backing away very carefully.

VINCENZO: She has already risen.

(Gasps from the priests.)

VINCENZO: She is alive again. Already she has left her tomb, and walks among us.

ORSINO: No! It cannot be!

PIETRO: All of you, listen to me. My people are attacking in force. This is their morning, their moment of revenge. We must hurry away from here or they'll kill us all.

(Swords clash in the distance amid sound of panic.)

DOCTOR: They're taking the place by storm. We'll have to get out of here.

CHARLEY: Doctor, this way. You're going the wrong way.

DOCTOR: Everyone stop fighting each other. What's the matter with you?

PIETRO: You'll never convince them, Doctor.

DOCTOR: But this isn't the way.

CHARLEY: Look, follow Orsino. He's heading for the barge.

ORSINO: Out of my way.

VINCENZO: Trolls, toads everywhere.

DOCTOR: You two listen to me.

VINCENZO: Why should we listen to you? You engineered this entire fiasco.

DOCTOR: I did nothing of the sort.

ORSINO: Out this way. Here, the barge.

DOCTOR: Orsino, I must know. Why were you suddenly so keen on finding Estella's jewels?

ORSINO: What? Come on!

DOCTOR: It wasn't just greed, was it?

CHARLEY: Doctor, you must hurry. The barge'll go without us.

PIETRO: The water's the safest place to be.

(Sounds of crashing buildings going into the sea.)

CHURCHWELL: Mother of God, it's just how we imagined it. Facades crumbling and dropping into the swelling water.

DOCTOR: What is it about those jewels, Orsino? Why were they suddenly so important to you?

ORSINO: Her jewels, Doctor? You don't know? I thought you knew everything.

CHARLEY: Doctor, come on. Get aboard.

(On the water while there is the sound of falling buildings.)

PIETRO: Charley, I'm sorry. If it hadn't been for me you'd never have been mixed up in any of this.

CHARLEY: Never mind, Pietro. I'm sure I would have. The Doctor would have got me embroiled in it all somehow. Look at him. He loves being in the midst of it all.

DOCTOR: Keep the barge in the middle of the canal. If any of that collapsing masonry hits us we're dead.

(Sounds of large things falling and splashing into water.)

CHURCHWELL: Yes, we we're on the water. Everything else will be ruined. All the paintings will be destroyed, all the beautiful pictures! Oh! My city sinks. My city is dead.

VINCENZO: Orsino, in our moment of direst need, I offer you a bargain.

CHARLEY: Oh, this'll be good.

PIETRO: At least they've stopped stabbing each other.

DOCTOR: That's more worrying in my experience.

ORSINO: Speak, dog.

VINCENZO: You know the legends. And this dawn the legends are being proved true. You know that we must join forces if we are to find Estella.

ORSINO: You really think she has walked out of her tomb, Vincenzo?

VINCENZO: I am sure she has. She will be the salvation of us all.

PIETRO: I wouldn't be so sure of that.

DOCTOR: Shush. Pietro, let him talk.

VINCENZO: Leave the portrait, Orsino, the painting you have so assiduously claimed never existed. If we have that, we can call her to us. Without the remains and without her jewels, it is our only hope of calling her, and begging her to revoke this curse.

CHARLEY: It's too late for that. Look, the buildings are crumbling around us.

DOCTOR: No, it isn't too late. Orsino, do as he asks. Give him the painting.

CHURCHWELL: But the painting never existed. There was never any likeness of the Duchess.

ORSINO: There was one.

CHURCHWELL: What?

ORSINO: There was only ever one in the ducal palace, hidden away. When I betrayed her, that portrait was all I was allowed to retain. She left it in my care, like she left her curse. No one but I have ever beheld it. Come, we must return there.

CHARLEY: It'll be destroyed already. We can't go back. We should head to the open sea.

ORSINO: What do you know? What are you but a callow impostor? How dare you tell me what I should or shouldn't do, after you attempted to hoodwink me into thinking you were the reincarnation of my beloved?

DOCTOR: Get away from her, Orsino. Charley, stand behind me.

CHARLEY: No, let him speak, Doctor.

ORSINO: You came to me to convince me to marry you. Who are you to tempt me thus?

CHARLEY: And who are you to inflict your misery and self-indulgence upon a whole city? Look around you. The whole city is dying, because of the curse you brought upon its head. Your greed caused this, Orsino, your greed and your disregard.

ORSINO: Venice was always a greedy city. Outsiders always feared us. You are an outsider.

CHARLEY: But you believed me when I said I was your beloved. You played along.

ORSINO: I had waited a hundred years for this moment. What do you know about living for that long, and nurturing hope for that length of time?

CHURCHWELL: Now it is ending. Now we return to the lagoon.

VINCENZO: Enough! We are here.

CHURCHWELL: The ducal palace!

DOCTOR: It's still standing. I wonder why. Perhaps there's some influence at work none of us have even suspected here. Everyone hurry, quick, while there's still dry land left.

ORSINO: I will lead the way. All of you, behind me. I still rule here.

(Walking off.)

(Piano music still playing.)

ORSINO: Where have they gone? My guests, my people. They have fled.

CHURCHWELL: I can't blame them really, Your Grace.

ORSINO: No matter. I must find the portrait.

DOCTOR: Wait. Look, there are still people here.

VINCENZO: She is still here, that hag.

ORSINO: Where have my people gone?

LAVISH: Welcome back, everyone. Welcome to the end.

DOCTOR: Ms Lavish, I'm pleased to see you're all right still.

LAVISH: I'll always be all right, Doctor.

PIETRO: We can't stay in this place. My people will make for here at the first opportunity.

ORSINO: I haven't time for this.

(The music stops.)

VINCENZO: Yes, Orsino. Find what you came here to find.

ORSINO: I will.

LAVISH: Hold your horses, Orsino!

DOCTOR: Oh no.

CHARLEY: What is it?

DOCTOR: I should have seen this coming.

LAVISH: Churchwell, come here. Come up to my throne.

CHURCHWELL: Your throne?

ORSINO: You take the jest too far, old woman.

LAVISH: You are the Duke's art expert, are you not, Churchwell? You are his curator?

CHURCHWELL: Well, yes. But isn't that all rather beside the point now?

LAVISH: Hardly. Why don't you come up here and do your job?

CHURCHWELL: Your Grace?

ORSINO: Do as she tells you.

DOCTOR: I don't like the look of this.

(Walking down.)

LAVISH: Orsino, you say you are looking for this rare and vital portrait of your lost love? You say you have it hidden. How big exactly is this painting?

ORSINO: Tiny. It was tiny.

LAVISH: She gave it to you, didn't she, the morning that she left? She palmed it to you, and you didn't realise what you were holding until after she had gone?

VINCENZO: What is this woman talking about? Orsino, what is happening?

LAVISH: Tiny, you say. About the size of a cameo brooch? Was it something one perhaps could wear as a brooch, something that a funny, harmless old woman could wear, and no one would notice?

ORSINO: Perhaps.

LAVISH: Then closer, Churchwell. Be as expert as you like. Look at this.

CHURCHWELL: Mother of God!

LAVISH: Of pearl, actually. That's the backing anyway, but the brooch itself is painted. It's a portrait.

VINCENZO: No!

CHURCHWELL: It's impossible.

DOCTOR: It's all too possible, I'm afraid.

LAVISH: (laughs) You foolish men. You really haven't got a clue, have you? Go away now, Churchwell. You can stop breathing down my neck. You've done your job.

ORSINO: You, the Duchess? You are Estella?

LAVISH: Could you say it with a bit more conviction? But yes, I am your Duchess, and yes, I am returned to life.

VINCENZO: Our Lady!

LAVISH: Oh, do get up off your knees, you ridiculous man. I can't bear your drooling.

VINCENZO: You are returned to us. You are resurrected.

LAVISH: I was never dead, you dolt. Any halfwit could see that. I've been highly amused by you all. Running around stabbing each other on my account. It should be rather flattering,

but I'm afraid I end up thinking what ridiculous and savage creatures you all are.

VINCENZO: They are reunited. The Duke and the Duchess are reunited as the prophecy foretold.

LAVISH: And that's enough of that, by the way. I have to say I'm appalled at all this mythology that sprung up in my absence. What's the matter with you all? You find a mystery, and you plug it with all kinds of obfuscating nonsense. Chanting and sacrifices indeed.

ORSINO: I tried to have the cult stamped out. I knew you would never approve.

LAVISH: And you, what have you done in the last hundred years? Sitting around and moping. What a waste of time. I grant you extra life and you waste it, Orsino. You've squandered everything I ever gave you, including myself.

PIETRO: But, because you're together now, the city will be saved? Is that part of the prophecy true? Will you doom my people?

LAVISH: Your people. What a bunch of mutant upstarts. Charley, while we've got a moment, I must congratulate you. You did a rather good job of impersonating me in my youth.

CHARLEY: Why didn't you tell us? Why didn't you warn us sooner who you were? All of this could have been averted.

VINCENZO: It was the way things were always meant to be. The prophecy had to be played out.

DOCTOR: Nothing had to be played out. Can't you people see? Won't you ever learn?

There's no such thing as prophecy or fate. There are true events. Things that happen, and things that have to happen, and none of us can escape those. None of us can, and that's bad enough. I know that. But we don't have to invent myths to make it all worse. We don't have to create terrible destinies. We come to them sure enough. I thought my own people were bad enough with their legends, and their myths of great and terrible happenings, but you lot take the biscuit. The fates you encounter are all down to yourselves. You make it all up yourselves. Everything that has happened here is down to the capricious wills of two people amongst us, Estella and Orsino. You two are responsible for all of this.

LAVISH: I know all of this, thank you, Doctor.

CHARLEY: Then do something about it, Miss Lavish. Try to put it right. That's what the Doctor is telling you. It's all in your hands now.

LAVISH: My dear, as the High Priest here would no doubt tell you, if he wasn't scrabbling on the ground at my feet, the curse itself is quite irrevocable. I did quite a thorough job of damning this city to destruction, and my ex-beloved with it. I couldn't put things right if I tried.

CHURCHWELL: That's it, then.

LAVISH: I'm rather afraid it is. The lagoon will be left to the amphibious upstarts, and good luck to them.

CHARLEY: There must be something we can do.

LAVISH: When I say irrevocable, young lady, I mean irrevocable.

CHARLEY: Doctor, tell her. Tell her again you don't believe in magic and curses. Tell her there's always a way to put things right.

DOCTOR: Oh, I will, Charley. I do think there's always a way to put things right. If I didn't believe that I wouldn't get out of bed in the morning, I wouldn't eat breakfast, I wouldn't leave the Tardis ever. I would never have left home. There is always something we can do.

ORSINO: Then what do you suggest, Doctor? Our Lady has come back amongst us, but she is still bitter. She still wants us all to die. What can you do about that?

DOCTOR: Do you know, I might have an idea. You see, what we have here is someone not

of this world at all. We've got someone who has seen fit to play games with the lives of human beings. Someone who has magnified her malign and capricious will by amplifying it through a device from elsewhere. A device, not a curse, not magic, and a device I believe might be put to some use now.

ORSINO: Her jewels.

DOCTOR: And here they are.

(Jangling. Gasps.)

DOCTOR: You're not from this world, are you, Estella? I don't know where you're from, but you aren't from round here.

LAVISH: As if it's any business of yours, young man. Give me my jewels.

DOCTOR: I think I'll hang on to them for a bit. You see, I'm a bit of a traveller myself. I've knocked about a bit, and I can spot an alien interloper up to malarkey with the indigenous population a mile off. Did you know, Orsino, that your beloved wasn't human?

ORSINO: Not human?

CHURCHWELL: We all knew she was divine.

LAVISH: Oh, you obsequious fool, Churchwell. How dare you try to curry favour with me.

DOCTOR: It was never magic she was doing, just evidence of some supremely advanced alien technology. Didn't I tell you that some of the paintings in the collection weren't from here? They were from alien systems and places that Earth hasn't even heard of.

CHARLEY: Well done, Doctor. But what happens now?

VINCENZO: You say that our Lady's powers resided in this jewel alone?

DOCTOR: I'm afraid so.

LAVISH: It's magnified my will. But it was still my fabulous will that you were all enthralled to.

DOCTOR: These gems are rather powerful. A rather silly thing to leave lying about. Any one of us puny primitive beings might pick them up and amplify our malformed subjectivities willy-nilly, and bring destruction and terror down on the whole city.

LAVISH: Point taken, Doctor. Give me those gems.

DOCTOR: I think you've played with your baubles quite enough, Miss Lavish.

LAVISH: Give them to me, you hapless fop!

DOCTOR: I will return them to you on the condition that you use them to revoke the curse. You accelerated this city's demise. You can, I imagine, return it to its former glories.

PIETRO: And you'd better hurry. We can't have long left.

CHARLEY: Miss Lavish. Estella. You must do as the Doctor tells you. You must make up for all you and the Duke have done.

LAVISH: What we have done? What did I do but fall under the spell of a man by far my inferior. A pathetic creature from a spoiled, indolent race took my fancy, and made me stay here. He made his people love me, and flattered, I remained here. Then, he betrayed me, when it was too late for me to return to the stars and my own kind. When I was so caught up in this world and this people, he flung me away from him, as if I meant nothing. After everything I had given up for his sake. You, Orsino, you betrayed me.

ORSINO: I never meant to. I am sorry, Estella. Truly I am.

DOCTOR: Nothing like closure, is there, Charley? Now, Miss Lavish, do you accept the Duke's apology?

LAVISH: I most certainly do not. He can go to hell with the rest of you.

VINCENZO: But you are our saviour. We have worshipped you for a century, in the hope that you would save us when the day came.

LAVISH: What do I care for a bunch of snivelling human beings when I, I have walked among the stars.

DOCTOR: That's hardly charitable. Human lives are worth something, after all. I too have walked through the stars, Estella, but I always get caught up here on Earth. There are human beings I value a very great deal, and I would risk my life on account of anything.

LAVISH: Then you are a fool.

ORSINO: You are nothing like the woman I loved. You are still the same person, but your heart is black with poison and gall. You have turned bitter and wicked, Estella. Do you really care for nobody?

LAVISH: I, I hardly know any more. I feel that once I did, but I have grown so very wretched and old, Orsino. While you have remained as you were and languished, I have become so terribly old.

VINCENZO: Our Lady, take the jewels, revoke the curse, bring our city back to life, and rule with your Duke here, over us.

LAVISH: It isn't as easy as that. In a way, I wish it was. But there is a price to be paid for a prolonged life. Something else must decay and die. There is a balance to magic.

CHARLEY: You mean that because you prolonged your life from the Duke's, Venice had to fall?

PIETRO: And so if you restore the city

ORSINO: Doctor, give me those jewels.

DOCTOR: What for?

ORSINO: Give them to me, Doctor. I think I see a way out of this.

LAVISH: Orsino, I beg you. Don't do what I think you're going to do.

ORSINO: Doctor, give the necklace to me.

DOCTOR: What are you going to do?

ORSINO: You will see.

LAVISH: Orsino, no!

DOCTOR: Can I trust you, Orsino?

ORSINO: You will simply have to trust me, Doctor. To put right everything that we spoiled, a hundred years ago.

DOCTOR: Here you are.

(Jangling.)

VINCENZO: Orsino, no. What are you doing?

CHURCHWELL: Your Grace!

PIETRO: Leave him. It's only fitting.

VINCENZO: But he is insane. He's putting on her necklace.

CHARLEY: It's glowing, Doctor. Is he insane?

ORSINO: I might be insane after all these terrible years, but at last I realise what I have to do now.

DOCTOR: He's using it to channel his thoughts and desires. He's imposing his will upon the city. Look. The jewels have come to life, they're opening like eyes.

(Sizzling.)

CHARLEY: It's too bright. I can't see.

ORSINO: Estella, this is right. Join me in the flame.

LAVISH: You will die, Orsino. Restore this city, and it will come at the price of your own life. It will take every shred of your life force.

ORSINO: I have had too much already. I have been far too greedy. Join me, Estella. Step into the flame. Grow old with me.

VINCENZO: Our Lady, no! He's tricking you. The flames will destroy you. Stay with us!

DOCTOR: She must decide for herself. Estella, Ms Lavish, whatever you want to call yourself, you must know Orsino cannot save this city alone. To do what he wishes you must go with him.

LAVISH: I know that, Doctor.

DOCTOR: And do you still love him?

ORSINO: (echo) Estella!

LAVISH: Do I love him? Yes, of course. I always did.

DOCTOR: Then there's no need for bitterness. Why don't you go in peace, then, hmm?

LAVISH: Yes, I will. Goodbye, everyone.

(Walking forwards.)

VINCENZO: No!

CHURCHWELL: Stand back, you fool, you'll be killed too!

DOCTOR: Down, everyone.

(Explosion. Sizzling, then silence.)

CHARLEY: Doctor?

DOCTOR: Yes?

CHARLEY: Are we alive?

DOCTOR: I should say so. Do you feel alive?

CHARLEY: I feel rather sore. My ears are ringing.

DOCTOR: Then you're definitely alive.

PIETRO: Look. Look at them.

CHURCHWELL: That's all they came down to in the end, is it? All the legends and myths surrounding them, and that's all that's left.

DOCTOR: But they embraced each other at the very last second, did you see, Churchwell? They held each other.

VINCENZO: Who cares about that?

DOCTOR: What?

VINCENZO: She did it again. The Duke betrayed her once more and Estella fell for his trap, and this time it killed her. It pains me to say it, but she was a fool.

CHARLEY: But she loved him, Vincenzo. Of course she stepped into the flame.

PIETRO: Wait.

CHURCHWELL: What is it?

PIETRO: Can't you feel it?

CHURCHWELL: What?

DOCTOR: He's right, you know. Quickly, come to the window.

(Footsteps.)

CHARLEY: Hold open these curtains. Help me.

(Drapes moved.)

DOCTOR: Look at that light. Isn't that the most gorgeous morning light you've ever seen?

CHURCHWELL: The city. It's restored.

DOCTOR: Venice has returned from the dead.

(Bird song heard.)

DOCTOR: The Duke and Duchess have kept their bargain. They died, and the city is

returned to us.

PIETRO: What a mess it'll be in.

DOCTOR: There'll be lots to sort out, but it's as good a time as any to get rid of the old cobwebs and debris.

CHURCHWELL: Speaking of which. Look, Vincenzo.

(Feet running.)

CHARLEY: What's he doing, Doctor?

DOCTOR: What any fanatical high priest in his right mind would do, of course.

(The peal of bells in the background starts up.)

DOCTOR: He's grabbed the remains of the bodies and legged it.

CHARLEY: True to type.

DOCTOR: He'll be down some bolt-hole in some smoky cellar and worshipping those ashes and twigs faster than you can say Jack Robinson.

CHURCHWELL: He got away. He took them. He took their corpses wrapped up in his cloak.

DOCTOR: You can't stop him worshipping and fantasising what he wants to, Churchwell.

You can't even stop him from striking up a brand new lunatic cult, but at least those ghastly ashes are off your hands now. You've just got to get on with it, and make sure you're starting the whole thing off on the right footing.

CHURCHWELL: But the paintings. Will the paintings be safe?

DOCTOR: Many things will have been lost, I imagine. It was a rather difficult night.

CHURCHWELL: I must go at once and check.

PIETRO: Now?

CHURCHWELL: No. It will wait. Either they are there safe in the museum, or they are gone.

DOCTOR: Wise man, Churchwell. After all, you wouldn't want to be like the ghastly Vincenzo, would you? Scrabbling after revenants and relics and horrid souvenirs?

CHARLEY: So what you're saying, Doctor, is that you can't live your life through objects. Is that your little moral?

DOCTOR: Charley, as if I'd ever come up with a moral. But yes, I suppose I do think that.

CHARLEY: Doctor, you're as bound up in objects as the rest of us. Oh, you pretend to be the vagabond and all, but that Tardis of yours is crammed full of nonsense. I believe it's time we got back and started cleaning it up and clearing some of the old junk out.

DOCTOR: Never. I, I was talking about religion and misplaced faith, not bric-a-brac and things that might come in useful. But that reminds me. It's probably time we were on our way. Pietro, could you give us a lift?

CHURCHWELL: It's goodbye then, Doctor.

DOCTOR: Think yourself lucky, Churchwell. If I were to stay I'd only cause more chaos. I reckon it's time these Venetians were left to rebuild their city in peace. But while I'm here, I'll put in a word for the gondoliers, for Pietro's people. It doesn't do to have an underclass, you know, it really doesn't do at all.

(Boat moving on water.)

DOCTOR: This is a lot easier than it looks. I'll soon have the hang of it.

CHARLEY: How's he doing, Pietro?

PIETRO: (laugh) Not bad.

CHARLEY: Pietro says you're not bad, Doctor.

DOCTOR: (laugh) Cheek. I could have the hang of this in no time. You know what, I might

just hang up my travelling hat for good and take up being a gondolier full time. It's quite relaxing.

CHARLEY: You don't wear a hat.

DOCTOR: I might get one of those nice stripy tops.

PIETRO: I've been thinking it over. I still think it's incredible such a myth should grow up around the Duke and Estella. Just two people. All that mess, just because of them.

DOCTOR: It's amazing to me that human beings can invest so much emotional energy into legends, into stories like this, but they always do.

CHARLEY: Oh, you two men. What do you sound like?

DOCTOR: What do you mean?

CHARLEY: It was all about love in the end, wasn't it?

DOCTOR: I suppose so.

CHARLEY: Oh, don't go all sheepish, Doctor, you know it was. Don't you think it's fantastic? A love affair that could lay waste to a whole city?

DOCTOR: Yeah. Sounds a little inconvenient to me.

CHARLEY: They still loved each other in the end, after everything. They knew they had to die together, right at the bitter end.

PIETRO: A hundred years of waiting. I can't imagine it.

DOCTOR: It isn't that long.

CHARLEY: Oh, here we go. The mysterious Doctor holds forth again about the nature of Time. Get punting, Doctor.

DOCTOR: It, it, it isn't that long, really, a hundred years of solitude.

CHARLEY: Well, it would be for me. It would be for anyone if they had to wait that long for someone to return. I hope you'd never abandon me like that, Doctor.

DOCTOR: Abandon you? No, and I wouldn't lose you in a game of cards either. Of course not. You're my best friend.